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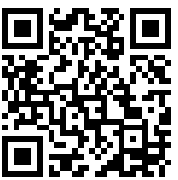

PLAIN TALES FROM FLANDERS

P. B. CLAYTON

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THE SMOKING FURNACE

AND

THE BURNING LAMP

A GROUP OF SERMONS
CONCERNING TOC H

EDITED BY

THE REV. P. B. CLAYTON, M.A., M.C.

With a Frontispiece

Crown 8vo. Paper Covers 2s. 6d., Cloth 4s.

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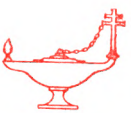
PLAIN TALES FROM FLANDERS

by

P. B. CLAYTON
FOUNDER-PADRE OF TOC H



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LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO
1929

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DEDICATED TO
THE "GEN"
ALIAS
ARTHUR PETTIFER, M.M.
PRIVATE, THE BUFFS, 1885-1919
WHO LANDED IN FRANCE WITH THE BUFFS IN OCTOBER 1914, AND IN NOVEMBER OF THE FOLLOWING YEAR, BEING THEN ONE OF TWENTY-EIGHT SURVIVORS, WAS DETAILED AS BATMAN TO A PADRE OF 16TH I.B., IN COMPANY WITH WHOM HE SERVED IN TALBOT HOUSE IN POPERINGHE AND YPRES UNTIL 1918, AND IS NOW
A VICE-PRESIDENT OF TOC H
AND
CLERK OF THE WORKS
TO
ALL HALLOWS BERKYNGECHURCH

791198

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ALL HALLOWS PORCH ROOM,
BYWARD STREET, E.C.3.
Easter, 1929

MY DEAR OLD GEN,—Dr Johnson, that robust genius born to grapple with whole libraries, maintained that the character of a soldier is high. This is what you have taught me. Others have come and gone. You only from the first day of Talbot House in Poperinghe, and even earlier, have shared, and more than shared, the day's dilemma. When superficial minds are on the fret, there is nothing better than a dose of Gen.

Together, we have built a dugout and—ten years later—cleared a crypt. We have walked together when the *pavé* ended, and been together prisoners of hope at Knutsford. For fourteen long years, each with its countless crises, nothing has been hid between us. Yet your friendship has lived up to the street-boy's definition—" a friend is a bloke who knows all about yer and yet likes yer. See? "

You will find this book wearisome; and you will not be alone in your discovery. But you at least will not think too hardly of it, for you know as none other the instant tyranny under which it has been set down. What money it may earn will go towards a certain Fund we wot of, whereby your home may be secured to you, and your untiring work for us all rest on the status long its due—a service of pure love.

Yours always, and much longer,

P. B. C.

(for you disapprove of my alias).

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The poem " Follow me 'ome," from the book entitled *The Seven Seas*, by Mr Rudyard Kipling, published by Messrs Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, and Messrs Doubleday, Doran & Company Inc., New York, is included by kind permission of the Author and the Publishers.

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THE HOUSE THAT LOVE BUILT

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THE HOUSE THAT LOVE BUILT

ATHWART the Forum of old Rome, hell opened her mouth suddenly. Then Curtius rose and rode; and earth, appeased, closed over him. I give you once again, before the moss obliterates their names, the toast of those who loved but left our tables, having a work to do. Let an old limner ply his fading colours. Let a camp-follower tell.

It was not in hate but in love that your son, your brother, your father, went about his duty in Flanders. It was love with him all the time; love led him there, for your sake. We of the islands, small and close, or far away and great, do not deify our Flag or our Country, as did the *poilu*. To us it is a cottage with creepers on it, or one house in a street of many, or a country lane, or a school song, that made the Salient impregnable. Every officer and every man among us had somewhere stowed away a wallet full of old letters and likenesses that were the true motive of his going to that dread place. As we went to and fro, we were compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses, and you were chief among their number. Only he did not want you to see too

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closely the miseries he endured. It was not the Censorship that blinded your eyes. It was his deliberate wish that you should not suffer for his sake, while he was suffering for yours. So, as it was love for you that sent him there, he (where he now is) does not regret that his love led—as love always leads—to sacrifice.

As you follow in his steps do not, therefore, be over-sad. If your eyes are dim, his were clear and steady, and there was more than a little happiness in his heart. For he knew that he had risen to the greatest nobility there is in man, to serve and suffer that others might go free. It was this that made him cheerful even in that hell. Hence came his carelessness, his patience, his humour, his ungrudging devotion. His anxieties (by a miracle of virtue) were for you rather than himself. Rations and post came in together, and the post won every time you wrote to him. Letters were of more value than many biscuits. Tins of bully beef were not infrequently thrown away, but old letters never, and there was very little waste-paper in the litter of the battlefield. Why did he cherish your few—and, forgive me, sometimes undiscerning—pages with such care? They were tokens, symbols, sacraments of the love that made you and kept you one with him; and it was love for you, and sheer doggedness—not the thought of a court martial—that made him hold on.

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Within the narrow half-circle drawn round Ypres, at one time even an acuter sector, every man he met was, in a very real rough sense, his blood-brother, sharing a public mind set on a public purpose. Taken all round, they ran risks that were alike imminent and oppressive, above, upon, and under the earth. Some risks were greater, others were more constant. It was give-and-take; and those who took the greatest risks were among the happiest for so doing. Every fresh experience of danger on his part brought the goal of peace and reunion nearer—and that was enough for him. Do not, therefore, picture him as a grief-stricken lonely figure. I knew him well, and he was anything but that. He was more like a member of a picked and plucky team playing up the wind on a sodden and slippery field—a hard-breathing, dexterously-moving figure, with always an ounce of energy in reserve. Remember that his stamina and his powers of recuperation were matchless. If he fell sick he was not allowed to remain, but was spirited away to one of the hospitals behind Poperinghe, if not farther. To-day the Salient as you see it is a place of graves. But to us it was a big arena full of fine life and strong men, who laughed and sang and trudged along and toiled, lifting great weights and digging great ditches, and manhandling great guns. Every revetting frame, every duck-board, every shell-case, every wisp of wire was carried from

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the limber or from the metre-gauge track to the spot where it was needed by the combined and disciplined energies of man.

They were, moreover, amateurs at the work. We all were; on our side at least trench warfare was a thing undreamt of. In the blind Aftermath of war, some peace-emboldened orators protested that the survivors having served no apprenticeship were therefore ineligible for employment. For those who watched them in the Salient it was a dubious argument to adopt. It were easier far to make bricks without straw than to come fresh into that arduous and technical trade of War, and pick it up like a past master in a month or so. To cook, and dig, and wire, and set fuses, and lay lines and roads; to listen and lie still and crawl forwards and find the way (where there is none) at night; to build a "bivvy" for yourself and your mate that will keep out rain, and heavier things that come more suddenly; to hammer in stakes when you can't see what you're trying to do, and not to laugh or swear too loudly—these are tasks to which they served a tedious apprenticeship. Still more formidable the vital task of learning to lead and to command men older than yourself, and sometimes far more war-wise, until you have knit them into one supple instrument of action, one stubborn and resourceful whole, whose breaking-point is a hairbreadth higher than that of the

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next platoon of men individually no less gifted or gallant; until your men become so surrendered in spirit to your will that they know no other obedience, yet (when you are down and under) so heart-whole that the fruits of your teaching and leading can be in a moment transferred to another. Honour where honour is due. The victory was in a measure the property of the High Command, but it was a subaltern's and a sergeant's war.

I am ill qualified to say these things, since they came but little within my own experience. But if they are true it is right that you should know them, however little it becomes the witness to turn judge. Indeed I was only a witness at all in that I kept a rest-house back in Poperinghe, and my customers from time to time invited me to repay their calls. In the rest-house they rested—that is, they turned to other things than war. There was less said about the war in Talbot House than probably anywhere else in Europe at the time. As a topic it had its limitations, like the weather. As a conversational opening its vagaries were of value, but no more than that; the real thing was to get relief from it, relief comic, serio-comic, educational, spiritual. Outside there were sharp words of command, feet moving together, the rumble of congested traffic, the narrow crowded pavements, the slatternly shop-windows. Inside was comfort and warmth, and light and music,

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and a touch even of home and of the love that came out to them thence. It was only second-best, of course, but it was not make-believe; and during the three years of Talbot House in Poperinghe, let alone the six months' life of the daughter house in Ypres, more than half-a-million men in tunics came in and out of the large white house that stands next to the chemist's in the Rue de l'Hôpital.

It may be, if you knock, that its owner,[1] M. Coevoet-Camerlynck, will permit your entrance. If so, and you climb the stairs until you reach the top of the steepest flight of all, you will find yourself in a large attic. Here you are on holier ground perhaps than any, even in the Salient, to an English way of thinking. For this was the Upper Room, to which men of many dispositions found their way freely, and where the God of Love was very near. Perhaps 100,000 during the three years have climbed the stairs before you. Certainly some 20,000 in all have there received the Sacrament of His Victorious Passion. Some 800 have been here confirmed; some 50 grown men were here baptized. The idlest mind would reverence the place; and you, I know, will kneel.

The thing which began there, in that big white house, did not end with the war. It moved home, and you may gladly come and see it if you will; for "Toc H" (as it is now known

[1] The House is for sale! But where's the money? (1929)

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in virtue of the B.E.F. signallers' affectionate diminutive for Talbot House) is too much involved in the lives of a vigorous fellowship, some 20,000 strong, to think of singing its Nunc Dimittis. True, the task in the Empire is far more complex than it was in Flanders; but (in the opinion of those who have every reason for knowing the facts) the need is even more urgent, for the Ypres Salient was full at least of unstinted comradeship, but civil life is of the most uncivil kind. In the Salient, too, you were involved in an enterprise so great that you became great to sustain it. In London you work on a high stool at something you despise, and live only when you leave it. Yes, London, Calcutta and Buenos Aires are uglier, lonelier and more dangerous places than Ypres, and the casualties are unnumbered and inglorious.

The first ten years of the new "Toc H" have proved its case; and it now stands four-square "with its reward with it, and its work before it." True, it is badly off, but that is no fault of its own. Meanwhile, the old membership is grey but eager, and the younger generation is at the helm already, asking your cheerful company. They are doing their country's work as truly as did their elder brothers there, but it is hard for them (let alone the charitable public) to have imagination enough to see it in this light. They

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will do so only when the world itself acknowledges, and religion itself proclaims, that while little things are little things, yet faithfulness in little things is a very great thing indeed.

NOTE.—The old Chapel is now set up at Mark I. (24 Pembridge Gardens, London, W.2). Pilgrims who would see it will be more than welcome.—P. B. C.

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THE LAND OF BEULAH

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THE LAND OF BEULAH

CICERO once declared that he would rather be wrong in the company of Cato than hold with others the luck of the deal in truth. For some of us, John Bunyan is the Cato of British Christianity, and we'd as lief be wrong with him as right with all the rest beside. In good sooth, "I am a very ignorant Christian man"; and when it comes to such deep matters of spiritual conjecture as the condition of the soul at death I would follow the Tinker against any living divine whatsoever. It is a point whereat the Gospels pause, and book-learning leads you nowhere; but Bunyan is solidly certain that there is a land of Beulah, whence Paradise is seen: though Beulah be on this side Jordan.

Take Alexander Whyte's most magical meditations on Bunyan, and turn to find the town-plan of that knot of pleasant, open, sun-lit houses which constitute the county capital of Beulah, as Bedford is to Bedfordshire. It is a bustling yet not hustling place; it has its note of age, its archives full of famed signatures. Yet it has no need to mope or brood on past greatness, for it is ever the scene of a daily confluence

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coming from either direction. Here are brave pilgrims limping blithely home, like little fleets sore put to it at the heads of the haven; and thither come others on commission from the City of Cities, a Legion of Shining Ones, to lead the pilgrims, when rested, up on their final stage. Beulah, for all its beauty, is first of all a thoroughfare bordered with parks, vineyards and the King's own spice-gardens; each one of which is ever open, not to him that hath a name, but to him that hath a need. By day the bells are merry, and martial trumpets tell of order and obedience as the twin pillars of the peace of the people of God. By night, if night it be, the Pilgrim Chambers are perfumed with nose-gays of camphire, spikenard and cinnamon, apt explanation of the laughing children they had seen so busy in the King's own gardens. Even their pitchers of bathing water are prepared with choice herbs to soothe their tired skins to health and hardihood; against the cold dark water that awaits them on the morrow.

From Bunyan to Flanders is no far cry; for John says himself that some of the first copies left *The Peacock in the Poultry* for the Lowland wars then (1677) long drawn-out, and brought their solace to the common soldier.

" In France and Flanders, where men kill each other,
My Pilgrim is esteem'd a friend, a brother."

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No scruple therefore need gainsay a happier memory than some of happenings twelve years old.

Our Beulah was a village by the coast of Northern France. Its name? The fashion of *disciplina arcani* clings, after the need for it is gone: but do not, I beg you, think that this episode is other than true. Late in the dusk of a perfect August evening in 1917 an English officer and his groom rode in to Beulah and walked their horses to a thatched and timbered *Mairie*. The *Maire* did not expect them; still less did he expect the long column of wagons and guns from which they had ridden forward. The blunder was with them; for at another place of like name, some four leagues back and to the right of the Route Nationale, no doubt they were awaited and all provision made. Yet tired men and tired horses, two hundred or more of each, the survivors of a sorely tried battery sent out to rest and to refit after two years of Ypres, could not be argued with or turned away. "Let them come in," he said, "and le Bon Dieu will aid us to provide a welcome." The officer returned, armed with this prayerful promise, to the head of the column of dust now dimly discernible. Ill news enough to over-weary men, expecting the best billets ever yet experienced: yet, at least, they need not turn back, and then—one never knew. Meanwhile the air was tender in its touch: the twilight

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deepened, but the light still lingered, reluctant to be gone. A strange sound broke the stillness —children's laughter, and then not laughter only; for these had come out on errands most urgent and unusual. Some, to judge discreetly by their infant age and airy clothing, must have come straight from bedtime. Perhaps they had resented bed, that endless summer evening, and some wee child had breathed a prayer that something should happen to prevent the dull rehearsal of death's image. If so, that prayer was answered in a moment; for a clatter of sabots halted at every house, and all the children were demanded to run at once to the *Mairie*. There they were quickly told their parts. They were to go gaily out and bring in the English soldiers with triumph. It was to be a *Fête champêtre*. But they must not ask for presents, not even for tunic buttons; and they must not get hurt by heavy wheels or horses. They would pluck some flowers and sprigs of blossom, could they find them by the way; and if all this meant the delaying of the Battery, the time so gained would help the Entente. So much for all the *bébés*; the older children would come again to the *Mairie* later for one more errand in the dark.

Most of the servants of those six growling guns are long since dead; but even those who still now wait their turn could not, if you consulted them, quite tell what happened next. Guns and

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gunners alike were taken off their guard, captured and swallowed up to the last man and mule. The victory of laughing love complete, the column at last moved in, the horses treading carefully for all their weariness, and few without light burdens balanced astride before the saddle. The dark had come by now, but was not that a rose, a sweet French rose, that fell from those dark windows? Now windows are dark no more, for little dips are lit, robbing perchance the saints; yet this is for *l'Entente, vous savez. Ma foi, que voulez vous de plus? Les saints eux-mêmes comprennent.*

The *Mairie* doors are widely opened, and warm light shines from within. *M. le Maire*, full habited in haste, stands forward on the topmost step, one hand upon a railing. A hush of horror falls on officers and men. Must this most pleasant dream descend to nightmare? A speech! And, with the early dead beneath the Altar, they silent cried, "How long?" *M. le Maire* senses their thought, and says so. Three sentences follow: the first of welcome to what the village can offer: the second says why the offering is but poor and unprepared: the third announces to the astonished interpreter, and to those few others who hang with him upon the words, that the village had been for some months wondering why it had not been chosen to billet *nos amis, les Anglais*. Then, archly, the final and amazing word that no English troops had entered the

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village since Crécy, and then "*pas amis, pas civilisés. Mais, ce soir. . . .*" And it is over.

Meanwhile the omelettes and the chips are taking shape: great barns with mellow hay and beanstalks, enough for the dreams of all Jack-the-giant-killers, are making ready. The horses are safely piloted past an orchard, and picketed in a harvested field. The officers frequent the *Mairie* and are therefore party to the midnight comings and goings of the elder children, which result in two fresh eggs, fetched from outlying farms, being ready for every man on the morrow. Ah! Beulah! Beulah! We did not spy the golden city thence, but most of us—the best of us—soon crossed the flood which never wholly lost its chill, for all that trumpets sounded.

Yes, Beulah holds its memories, and ever good pilgrims come there still, their footsoreness forgotten in a true contentment. Only self-will debars you thence, when shadows fall and work is done. The pilgrim certain to attain is he who has at some earlier stage experienced the ineffable delight of renouncing joy for a while, that he may meet it later, fresh and less far from its source. From Beulah Land, we are assured, you cannot anywhere catch sight of the dark towers of "Doubting Castle." Nor can you see the River thence, although you know it near. Its murmurs mingle in your dreams that night. It's well to sleep within the sound of water.

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A year ago I watched an old man's bedside, and on the day that was the last for nurse and doctor, only his busy hands expressed his habits. All the long afternoon they moved, they rested and then moved once more. The mind, now crossing into Beulah Land, was even then not weary of its hobbies. There was no doubt whatever, as we watched him. Now it was prayer-time, hands devout or turning over pages. Now it was card-time, finger and thumb equipped to plod once more through a protracted Patience. Now what was this? Why, fishing-time: the rod well loved, held as it seemed at an enticing angle. So he came on his way to Beulah Town, and all the bells did ring.

There was a silence two thousand years ago within the Upper Room, a silence none but One could break. He had made it Himself by saying: "Thou shalt deny me thrice." What answer was there to that? He who made dumb lips speak had stricken Peter dumb.

Whereafter, like a solitary bell to herald many reeling spires, He said: "Let not your hearts be troubled . . . in my Father's country there are many Beulahs, Beulahs beyond the River. I would not tell you if it were not so. I go to make them ready." "Love's running errands," said the East End child.

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TO THE ELDER BRETHREN
OF TOC H

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TO THE ELDER BRETHREN OF TOC H

FRIENDS, who have pardon'd us, stay and stoop down on us,
Stumbling to substance your Picardy dreams.
Be ye our bedesmen, too patient to frown on us,
Training and tuning your blundering teams.
Men shall take heart that the first of their Brotherhood
Loved not their lives to the death, to maintain
England's uncoveting coveted motherhood
Faithful and free from un-neighbourly stain.

Knit by your names, and alert to your phrases,
Eastward and Westward, a sonship shall stand,
Pitting the map with pure pools of your praises,
Taking the road at your call and command.
Pyramids built to bedizen a Ptolemy
Wind and sand feed upon, ages attack.
Foursquare a monument fosters your memory;
Aye, and shall flame, when your brasses are black.

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THE STORY OF M——

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THE STORY OF M——

I SHALL not be able to tell this story in full, for reasons which will be only too plain when you have read it. Indeed, it has never occurred to me before to write it down; yet I think that of all true tales concerning Toc H, this at least is one which should not be lost to those who come after. It is not in any way an amusing story. On the whole, having had my share of other people's tragedies, I am inclined to think it is one of the grimmest I have ever known.

Now, this is the story of M——; inaccurate, no doubt, in detail; for my friendship with him, while as deep as with any, was not the kind that asked the name of his school or the comfort of his upbringing. He was, I think, within the first half-dozen officers to discover the true nature of Toc H. He was then a Captain in the Divisional Signals, a Regular, well ahead of his promotion, for I suppose his age was a little more than twenty. He had won the M.C. a few months before I joined the Division. He was still revelling in the war, which was to him little else than a rough amusing football match, exactly suited to displaying his ardent Irish spirits at their highest.

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He was popular in the best way both above and below, and—what was most difficult of all—with his own subalterns, one of whom I remember especially for his almost absurd fidelity to his leadership.

I did not think at the start of it that M—— had depth behind. He had learnt the code of the present generation, which regards a "heart upon sleeve" as the supreme indecency. The first I knew of the hinterland of his character was contained in a letter—still somewhere in the archives of Toc H—in which he writes at length on the problem as he saw it—the eternal problem—of fortuitous preservation: why one should be taken and another left. His own mind, as expressed in his letter, was clear that, whatever the meaning of death, unsought security must compel very serious thought about the future. He put it to me that it would be right to challenge those who came through more than any other set of men who ever had been through anything, to justify their existence; and that if he was to be thus challenged, he himself would be inclined to reply that the bill was a true one, and his life no longer his own. He would therefore be prepared, if he came through, to try to find some work for God, not merely to prevent another war, but in the wider service of His Kingdom.

This letter was passed from hand to hand, in confidence, both among many of my fellow-

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chaplains and others more highly placed at home. It was the idea here framed which forced forward in many minds the Service Candidates' issue which I had sketched, as a theory only, in the *Challenge* of April 1915.

After this letter, others went to and fro, all interspersed with visits and long talks; until, a few months later, his name was definitely entered on the list of Service Candidates. By this time he was on the Somme, and beginning, so I heard, to lose a little of that light-heartedness which, coupled with his fine soldiering, had been so wonderful an attribute. The iron was beginning to enter into his soul, and the sheer tragedy of war was threatening to engulf him.

By Easter 1917 he was, I think, a Major of Signals, attached to a Corps Staff, and working sleeplessly to perfect his signals for the great battle which was immediately to succeed the Feast of the Resurrection. On the second or third day of the highly successful operations he came, unsummoned, to his G.O.C., saluted, and announced with utter seriousness that he had just come down from the line, and that it was his intention to cease to operate the Signal Service from noon that day. The General, who must have well deserved his post, asked him quietly to repeat what he had said; as he was not sure that he had heard correctly. M—— did so, explaining that everyone who went to see

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the present state of the action at close quarters, the hell that had already been let loose, and the further hell inevitably to follow if his Signals did their work, must come at once to the conclusion that at all costs the thing must cease. A truce must be arranged; and, a truce once made, he was well assured that neither side would be persuaded by any politicians to renew the war. He added that, before he broke the Signals, he had seen that his duty was to report to the Chief under whom his service for the last three weeks had been performed. He was there for him to do with him what he wished, but obey he could no further.

The General, whose name I have never known —I heard this part of the story from M—— himself—stands finely in my mind. He told him he was quite plainly overstrained and did not know what he was saying; and no wonder, considering the service he had rendered and the almost entire absence of sleep and food which had been his condition for at least the last few days. He would send for the Medical Officer attached to Corps Headquarters and report M—— sick, and nothing more, giving him whatever time he needed to recuperate, and return to his senses and his service. Nothing whatever should be said about what had passed between them. M—— told me that he was thrilled by this generosity; and, to save himself from breaking down under the kindness of it, declined it

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roughly, swore that he was not ill, that his mind was clear and his purpose firm. The war was wrong, and he would gladly give his life to end it.

The General, still master of himself, and knowing that he had seen him early on the Easter Sunday, suggested that the Corps Chaplain should be called in. This was done, and the Chaplain tried, poor fellow, to do his best by proving once again the justice of our Cause. M—— told me, in a lucid moment later, that this was the most appalling agony of it all, and that he had great difficulty in not treating him as Paul once treated the High Priest.

At last he asked the General to send away the Chaplain, and when this was done surrendered to the doctor. The doctor, after a cursory examination, decided he was shell-shocked, dispatched him down the line, first in an ambulance to a C.C.S. and thence by train to the Base. In both hospitals M——'s power of self-control gave way utterly. The sight of the suffering, which he felt was due in one respect at least to his late branch of the service, well-nigh maddened him. He cried, " My God, my God, my work ! " until he had to be separated altogether, and placed so far as might be out of earshot. From the Base he was sent to England, and kindly treated wherever he went. From this stage onwards this part of my story is hazy, for I never received from him a clear account of it.

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I gathered, however, that after some three months he was—physically, at least—in some measure restored. He then sent in his papers; and in fear, imaginary or actual, of recruitment under the Compulsory Service Scheme he fled to his home in Ireland. There his mental health again grew serious. He had intervals of clear thinking, during which he sometimes wrote to me, but some of his letters, even then, began to be unmeaning.

In December 1920 his mother told me that he had been moved to London, and that she was seeing him daily at a private mental hospital at Putney Hill. She warned me what to expect, but no warning could have prepared me for what I found: the ghastliest parody imaginable of the man whom I had known and loved, utterly broken in physique, laughing sometimes eerily at nothing, sobbing with a startling suddenness, refusing food and drink.

He knew me at once, and asked with plaintive eagerness for news of Talbot House. His questions were intelligible, but his mind could scarcely hold the simplest answer. Staggering from his chair, at one stage, he drew me to the farthest part of the room, where was a child's desk with a seat attached. On it he threw himself, and feverishly seizing some scraps of scribbling paper and some stumps of coloured chalk proceeded to draw—that is, to scratch—a series of coloured lines; explaining all the while

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the trees and houses he thought he drew, and giving me, in a few minutes, four or five of these terrible scribblings, to be, as he said, pictures for the new House, as he had no money to give.

Then, having been prompted beforehand to do so, if I could, I tried to fall in with his now happier mood, and urged him slyly to drink to the health of Toc H in the egg-flip which lay untasted and rejected by him. With care and cozening, by drinking myself alternately, I succeeded in inducing him to swallow some of it. Indeed, so successful was I, in this matter only, that a few days later an old member of the House, then seeking work, was set to be his guardian and companion for these last few weeks. Again and again this pathetic toasting of Toc H worked as a momentary talisman, and to the end the very name of the House was the only one to which his mind would respond. Broken, self-starved, and mad beyond dispute, he died on 9th January 1922, when I was gone on my way to Canada.

There are many things men say against which the mind, instructed by some deep experience, rebels. When men speak lightly of that war, or some other which is, they say, to come, my mind flies back to M——. When others vow, in all the bitterness of ignorance, that the responsibility of command cost good men nothing, I find myself once more leaving a house on Putney Hill.

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"THEY SHALL GROW NOT OLD"

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"THEY SHALL GROW NOT OLD"

FROM the corner of a cupboard in the Porch Room has emerged to-night a bundle of papers which had of course no right to be there. They are, on the other hand, precious to a little group of men now middle-aged, and to the wife of one of them: maybe there are ten of us in all still surviving who would handle them with familiarity, and yet with reverence. It is perhaps well that I should allow the reappearance of this little roll of typed papers to act as a slow fuse to a memory ripened by ten years of testing since first George Dewdney found Talbot House in Poperinghe.

Any history of the war will give you adequate accounts of the use of gas, yet I doubt whether any discussion of the merely historical kind could summon to the minds of another generation the true picture of its incidence upon the souls of men. There was a muttered menace of its advent early in 1915, to which small heed was paid—for was it not forbidden by every code prescribed at Geneva and at The Hague? True, many shells had elements of poison in their bursting, but their main function remained explosive in their force, rather than corrosive

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in their fumes. On St George's Day 1915, on the ground near Saint-Julien, all this was for ever altered. From that moment onwards the war assumed a new and even ghastlier phase, and the torture of suffocation was added to its already sufficient horrors.

I was not yet become a soldier then, but from the survivors of the first gas attack I have heard more than enough to sear the event into my mind and memory for ever. There was something so utterly demoniac in the poisoning of the very air which all men must needs breathe that I do not think the conscience of civilized peoples since Christianity began has ever reached a lower ebb than when the first gas-cloud was emitted. The wretched Turcos, upon whom it principally fell—troops brave enough in the face of tangible danger—broke and fled gasping all down the road to Vlamertinghe, shrieking that the devil was indeed behind them. Off that narrow, poplar-lined avenue on the left, soon after Vlamertinghe is passed, there leads an unpaved road towards Ouderdom; along either side of this a few hours later lay more than eight hundred men, with foam upon their lips, clutching at their throats, their faces inhuman in colour: a month later, when I reached the great hospital on the cliffs of Le Treport, a few of them still lived, but none of them could speak. All the world knows how, at this stage, certain Canadian battalions, in-

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adequate in numbers even to sustain a defensive position, apart from its saturation in a clinging cloud of gas, went forward without supports to the inevitable doom of an amazing counter-attack. It is, I believe, no less true that, a few hours before, the headlong flight of the Turcos had been stayed at the Vlamertinghe cross-roads by a single English Staff officer, who reined his horse across the road to hold the fugitives from spreading the panic which their flight would inevitably have brought to Poperinghe. So gas became an instrument of war for the next three years. When saints or mountaineers—they are the same people in principle—behold a white cloud close to them their minds are opened to God's glory; but for a soldier a low-lying cloud spells the catching of his breath instinctively.

Our chemists were mobilized to retaliate—what other thing could we do?—and by the end the laboratories at Cambridge and elsewhere had the upper hand of their counterparts at Bonn and Heidelberg. Learned professors, of the greatest humanity in their private life, put into our hands weapons of torture compared with which the rack and the stake were innocent, and they who first launched the gas perished in thousands by it.

The first need, however, once the deadly potion had been distilled, was to find men to carry it into position and operate its diffusion—

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a delicate task indeed. To this end, with characteristic thoroughness and complete disregard of the human resources requisite, the younger chemists of the country were enlisted in a series of special formations of the Royal Engineers, called "Gas Companies," and denoted by the letters of the alphabet. One of these companies, each 250 strong and divided into sections, found its way to Poperinghe in 1916. The company in question was "P," and from first to last, during its two tours of duty in the salient of Ypres, it gave to Talbot House more sons and Elder Brethren, and among its survivors more builders of Toc H, than any other unit whatsoever. Of these survivors I can hardly speak with freedom; but at Nottingham, Stockport, Brighton, Folkestone, Mark II in London, and as far away as Bangkok, their work and their faith stands firm.

I do not know whether in this little roll of papers—the fragments of a now lost diary kept by George Dewdney's neat pencil and true tranquillity of conscience through those years of war—there occurs any entry regarding his first discovery of Talbot House and its Upper Room. Looking back, I know no more than that it seemed, from the first moment when he found it, as if he had been there from the beginning; he fitted in completely, like some lovely piece of furniture long needed and now occupying, to the great happiness of all, the place for which

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it was inevitably destined by the hand of its maker. Others who came with him were storm-tossed and impetuous in their joys and sorrows; he carried with him peace in the midst of war, and knew neither failure nor fear. He moved among them quietly, in all the humanity of true comradeship, in all the height of pure example. He was himself an instructed and intelligent Christian, conscious of many difficulties but unmoved by them to doubt. He and his closest friend, a Scotsman who still lives in this world, brought with them, often, others of all shades of conviction or of none at all; some went out again unchanged, but others—notably a tall Lancashire lance-corporal named Archie Forrest—found in Talbot House the true birth-place of their souls.

Archie stands alone in my experience—no easy thing to do. His time with Talbot House was possibly six weeks of more or less daily visiting, while the company who were working from Poperinghe went up by night to carry their terrible gas cylinders into position beyond our front line. By 1918 it had been discovered that far simpler and less costly ways could be employed; light tracks for trains were run right out into No Man's Land, and trucks full of "Rogers"—as the gas cylinders were called—could thus be let off together by means of an electric-fuse cable attachment. But in the summer of 1917 these facilities were not

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available, and men staggered for miles under the load of a great cylinder full of the deadliest poison, with themselves and their burden exposed to every burst of shelling or machine-gun fire. The actual casualties of "P" Gas Company during the six weeks of July and the early part of August 1917 in the neighbourhood of Forward Cottage, where they were working, amounted to 150 men, out of the carrying parties only 100 strong and continually reinforced; of one section, if I remember right, every man except one pioneer was a B.Sc.

After a few testing visits to Talbot House, Archie Forrest had summed up Christianity, and found it greatly to his liking; after a week he had presented himself for baptism; a month later he was confirmed, and made his first Communion; the week following he was killed a little past midnight at Saint-Jean, on his way back to safety. That was all. Yet, as any surviving member of the company would tell you, his life during that six weeks irradiated the whole horizon of his friends, and they were many and various; Pioneers, Sappers, and even Sergeants of other sections, spoke of him with something akin to envy; even among the officers, by no means so accessible, one or two found themselves, to their private astonishment, following in the direction in which his whole life led. After his death nothing would content the company but that some gift from them in his

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memory should stand for ever in the Upper Room, which he had taught so many of them to frequent. A curious chair, with a back contrived in such a way as to act upon emergency as a table, was their gift to the Chapel on his behalf. It was to serve sometimes as a credence-table, and at confirmations as a Bishop's chair, and it stands to-day in the old Chapel at Mark I House close to the tiny font at which he was baptized; two inscription plates are on it, made by two sections of the company, each bearing an amateur inscription; the first is beaten from a shell-case, and the other of thin silver, I know not whence.

But Archie came from Blackburn, where no doubt there are others like him in the raw material, lean, quick and curly-haired, with an element of fierceness in doing what they do with all their might. His sister is there to-day, and some years ago I met her at a meeting of six or seven which she had planned, and out of which the present Branch has grown and now maintains by many works of everyday service the Lamp which bears his name. There is, moreover, on the top floor of Mark I House in Pembridge Gardens an Archie Forrest Room, presented by a family who were wholly spared from the more direct losses and tragedies of the war; and to this, year by year, when the day of his birth into the new life comes round, the Mark I Lamp is carried by the hostellers,

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family prayers there said and the lamp left lit until Archie Forrest's successor wakes in the morning and extinguishes it. Nothing is more unlikely, had he lived, than that his name would have been known to a group of men, mainly students, and in business, and most in this house from the great public schools; but in Toc H death has a power of union which life in this world lacks, and those who might have found his ways uncouth, and his Lancashire tongue harsh to their taste, regard him, as they come and go, as an elder brother indeed: and yet he grows not old; for time, which halts with none of us here, is powerless to change him, and no lines of disappointment and disillusionment are on his face, nor is his hair tinged with grey.

His friend, George Dewdney, who brought him into something more than he suspected possible, survived those four long years and came safe home. Though the constant handling of the poison gas had somewhat affected his system, he claimed no recompense from the State, but set to work at once to rebuild his career. In August 1919, however, his lungs, already invaded, gave way with startling suddenness. I had not, I think, seen him since the war, and indeed did not then catch sight of him. He, also, had a sister, and they came together one summer night at Portsmouth to the church which I had left early in 1915, and to which that night I returned for a few hours.

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His sister told me afterwards that they had seen me when the service was over from the opposite side of the road; she had suggested to him that they should cross and come to me, but he decided against it, on the grounds that in my old parish I had best be left to speak with others, friends of yet earlier days. Thus it came to pass that I did not again see him before his death, a few weeks later, and only his little Memorial Room at Mark II[1] House, whence you may look, so wonderfully for London, between the trees and across the river, is the visible link with a friend so suddenly withdrawn from sight.

A year passed and there came to that House, quite unexpectedly and as it were by chance, the Scottish member of his section, who had completed his Degree course at Edinburgh, and was now beginning his career in London. At the time it so happened that the little room was vacant, and the Warden took him to it, unknowing what he did. We hear often enough of vicious circles, but here was the perfect round, a dove-tailed series of coincidences. The stranger from Scotland now living in his friend's room became a leader in Mark II and Warden in his turn; to-day he is a married man, and his wife George Dewdney's sister.

These, then, are the memories which spring to my mind from the little roll of papers

[1] The Sibel Countess Grosvenor House, 123 St George's Square, London, S.W. 1.

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lurking in the wrong locker. The wisest man in the world, the most cunning craftsman in the organization of societies and movements, could not create Toc H: it is a family above, below, most closely knit by God: and the threads of its interaction, while frail and faulty in themselves, are thus woven into a texture not unworthy to have been the very handkerchief of Saint Veronica.

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"FOLLOW ME 'OME"

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"*FOLLOW ME 'OME*"

ONE summer day, in 1917, a concert of the easiest kind was being held in the then newly opened hall of Talbot House in Poperinghe. The hall had been made by breaking through the wall into a farther hop-loft with a stronger floor, and a wooden staircase led from the garden to the hole in the wall, secured by an adapted door. This hall came to a bad end, for it was struck by two shells in quick succession in May 1918.

On the day of which I am thinking, the sing-song somewhat lagged. Volunteers from the audience were numerous; and those who volunteered most frequently were appreciated least of all.

At this stage, when I had almost reached the point of putting myself on, an unknown gunner entered the hall, and I asked him whether he could sing. He gave me an odd look; and, shrugging his shoulders, passed towards the platform. On the platform were a few pieces of scenery, among which he disappeared. A moment later he came back in full view upon the stage, and the universal genius at the piano struck up a lively tune.

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The gunner now removed his tunic, and took from the pocket a tooth-brush, rag and polish tin, and sat himself cross-legged on the one stage chair. By this time the piano had died away completely, and the audience was watching and expecting the preliminary patter of a comic song. What happened was far different. A humming began to come from between the man's lips as he polished his buttons. The tune gradually took shape, most exquisitely rendered. When the air had taken hold of our minds, it reappeared clothed in words, and these were the words he sang:

" There was no one like 'im, 'Orse or Foot,
Nor any o' the Guns I knew;
An' because it was so, why, o' course 'e went an' died,
Which is just what the best men do."

By the time the first verse was sung we were spellbound. We knew that we were in the presence of a great artist. Many such had at various times found their way to Talbot House, but none so strangely as this unknown man. There were whispers of identification, but the anonymity was not withdrawn. Then he proceeded to the verse:

" We fought 'bout a dog—last week it were—
No more than a round or two;

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But I strook 'im cruel 'ard, an' I wish I
'adn't now,
Which is just what a man can't do.

'E was all that I 'ad in the way of a friend,
An' I've 'ad to find one new;
But I'd give my pay an' stripe for to get the
beggar back,
Which it's just too late to do!

So it's knock out your pipes an' follow me!
An' it's finish up your swipes an' follow
me!
Oh, 'ark to the fifes a-crawlin'!
Follow me—follow me 'ome!"

By this time we had realized something more. This man was a great artist, yes. But this thing was not art in the sense of sudden enrichment of an entertainment by a mere skill. The man was singing his soul. There had been losses in his battery, and he had come down with Kipling's immortal song in his mind and found a concert which he could convert into a congregation with whose aid he might offer that amazing requiem:

"Take 'im away! 'E's gone where the best
men go.
Take 'im away! An' the gun-wheels turnin'
slow.

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Take 'im away! There's more from the place
'e come.
Take 'im away, with the limber an' the
drum.

For it's ' Three rounds blank ' an' follow me,
An' it's ' Thirteen rank ' an' follow me;
Oh, passin' the love o' women,
Follow me—follow me 'ome! "

As he finished there was absolute silence, the one possible tribute. The gunner rose, slipped on his tunic and came down the hall. Leaving the concert to look after itself, I pursued him. I did not ask him who he was. I do not know to this day. I only tried to thank him, as I would thank him now once more if he yet lives. In all my experience I have never known a man's soul thus shining through his art. He was in no mood for talking, and quickly disappeared into the night.

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TWO CUSTOMERS

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TWO CUSTOMERS

i

IT must have been in March 1925, when I was seated in a train running from Toronto to Port Hope, reading the *Toronto Globe*, that my eye caught the announcement of a farewell party to a Canadian missionary and his wife returning to duty at Nagano, Japan. The name " Nagano " caught fire in my mind, and I leaned back to recollect the circumstance under which I had first heard it.

In the early days of Talbot House, when the Canadians, together with the Guards, were holding the main battle-line of the Salient, Talbot House was serving a day and night purpose which made bedtime obsolete. The house nominally closed at 8 P.M. for the troops; at that time, onwards until 5 A.M., it was filled with officers going on leave. At 8 A.M. it reopened for the day's work. I slept, therefore, for the most part, in a chair in my sitting-room between 5 A.M. and 8 A.M. on mornings when there was not a Celebration of Holy Communion. On one such morning I was woken by a delightful Canadian sergeant, whom

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I had never seen before, amused to find me asleep. His story was soon told. He had come down from the line during the night, happy in the possession of his leave warrant; but he was not, however, due for the train until the night following. When his warrant had reached Battalion Headquarters he had been on duty at a listening post[1] in advance of our trenches, where, in the shell-holes behind the fragments of an old wall, it was deadly to move in the daylight. All day long, through the rain or the sun, men on duty there could only crouch in a confined position, with a few sticks of chocolate (if they were lucky) to keep them going. But when, under cover of dark, he had come in, he had been rewarded with his leave papers.

My next inquiry was concerning his home. At that time I had little knowledge of Canada, but I was certain when I heard the name Nagano that it did not sound Canadian. I said: "Nagano? Where?" and he replied: "Japan. My father and mother are missionaries, and my brothers and I were born there." During the day that followed our friendship became firm, as it could under such conditions; though normally the space of time would have been quite inadequate for the formation of ordinary friendships between the British. We clambered up to the old Chapel together, and

[1] Called "Forward Cottage."

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prayed for his father and mother, and brothers mercifully too young for the war.

That night, a few hours before his leave train was due to begin the crawl down to the coast, an orderly arrived from the transport line of his battalion. This man bore a note which the Sergeant opened carelessly, thinking it to be a message of good luck or some minor thing. The brightness left his face as he read it, and was succeeded by a strange tense struggle which I could not but notice. He handed the buff slip to me without a word. It was an order from the Adjutant that his leave was postponed, owing to a court martial upon one of his men, for some minor offence, to be held on the following day. The Sergeant was required in evidence, and his leave must be deferred. We climbed again to the Chapel and prayed, in the darkness now; and in the darkness he left me to return to duty. Yet after the first shock the spirit within him set finely to self-conquest, and no violent complaint was heard. For weeks after I awaited his return; until I found that his battalion had been hard pressed in a sudden emergency, and that he himself had been killed.

This was the solemn story which the name Nagano summoned to my mind as I sat in the train approaching Port Hope. In Canada the railway telegraph system is readily available, so I wrote and dispatched a telegram to his

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mother and father from the next station. It caught them on the train from Toronto to Winnipeg, where the *Globe* said they would be stopping for another farewell meeting. I myself left Trinity College, Port Hope, by the next day's train for Winnipeg, and on Winnipeg station platform I met two grey-haired people. They knew my name from his last letter; but little more than that. Their train was due out for the West within the next half-hour, and we therefore sat in the waiting-room at Winnipeg and I told them the story which I have told you.

Since then, in London and at Oxford, I have had the privilege of meeting two of his younger brothers, one in business and the other preparing for Ordination. His name is on our Roll of the Elder Brethren, and his photograph, given by his family to me, is in one of our Houses. When the day comes, as it surely will, for Toc H to find its way to the England of the Orient, that which this man suffered shall be remembered. There is no discipline in life like disappointment.

ii

In the first of these two stories I became conscious of a strange entanglement; for there was yet another occasion in 1916 upon which I was found asleep in my chair. This time it was a Dorset subaltern who woke me,

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his face alive with humour. He prophesied in rapid succession a number of inevitable consequences—I should be shot at dawn, and the Church would be disestablished; the Corps Commander was without, asking for me; the Kaiser had ordered breakfast, and so on. I sat up and looked about me. "As you see," I said, "at least I have been sleeping in the line of fire." And I pointed to the holes in the old door leading to the conservatory, and in the window opening on the narrow street. A piece of shrapnel had recently passed through the room, and given it an element of ventilation which the Belgian architect had never intended it to possess. Whereupon he shrugged his shoulders handsomely, and I went and had my bath.

Nothing was more pleasant than Poperinghe on a quiet and sunshiny morning, and in company with my cheerful guest I proceeded to the British Officers' Hostel in the Rue Boeschepe to consume an omelet and coffee. The British are not normally at their best at breakfast—unless they have been up all night. A certain bonhomie then seizes them, and this, together with deeper things still held in leash, augmented our understanding. His name was H—— M——, and his outlook on men and things characteristic of his age at the period in question; but thirteen years ago I could still remember my youth and appreciate

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his. During the day which lay before us he elected himself into the vacant chair of amateur librarian. An army at war can scarcely be expected to provide permanent librarians for a house within shell-fire; and a roll of the librarians of Talbot House would be far more extensive than those lists of pre- and post-Reformation vicars with which the English clergy delight to ornament their western walls. I fear that, if the truth were known, few of these lists would be without their element of incapacity and laziness. So was it with my librarians; who, however, succeeded one another so rapidly that their virtues and vices had little chance of egress. Here, however, in young H——, was an aspirant determined to succeed. He laboured at that library throughout the day as if his place upon the leave boat depended upon his achievement.

To imagine Talbot House library you must conceive of a very large cupboard, or a very small room, literally so crammed with books that the librarian himself could sometimes scarcely enter. To borrow one of these books you left your army cap in pawn, and took the volume to any part of the house or garden where you spied a comfortable chair or a corner unappropriated. Opposite the library, across an insecure landing, was the first-floor writing-room, a pleasant place apart from its linen windows, which had long ago replaced

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the shattered glass. Here, round the trestle-tables, bedecked as well as they might be with a bowl or two of flowers, men sat and wrote illimitably, or stood and waited their turn. To watch the twenty lucky ones at work was a first-hand insight into the varieties of educational standards which still exist in England. Here was the accomplished penman lolling at his ease and flinging fireworks of phrases into every paragraph. Here also was the great dumb son of the soil squaring his elbows to a task more exacting and unusual than any which the war called upon him to perform. Among these men H—— moved happily, his Sam Brown shed upstairs, one pocket full of nibs, and the other full of penholders. One common failing of the British race when engaged in the agonies of composition is to lean all too sternly upon the comparatively frail instrument which conveys their thoughts to paper. The result is pitiful and disastrous, and the ink flies everywhere. I doubt if the total output of letters that day was within a hundred of the day preceding. H—— would interrupt, and all the room would listen. Then there would be sounds from the library across the way, and peace would reign once more among the pools of ink.

When the afternoon came, tea in my room below was honoured by his presence. With the invited men and robust N.C.O.'s one or two

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senior officers had slipped in to share a Hampshire cake and the days' dilemmas. H—— distinguished himself once more, without intending to do anything of the kind, and kept us all agog with his exploits as librarian. Then came concert time, to which he would not contribute musically; but music was not the most essential feature.

The Chapel bells upon the staircase throbbed through the house for Family Prayers. He came with the rest, and made no comment, and I was shy to ask where his mind really stood; besides, there was another day to go, I told myself, for his leave papers were dated for the following night. That night it was my turn for bed, for on the next morning there was a Celebration—not yet a daily fact with us. Now the officers at this period slept on stretchers ranged along the floor of the upper landing. I conducted H—— to a vacant stretcher when the time grew seasonable. Only one was vacant, the stretcher at the foot of the Chapel staircase itself. I had still been shy of him; for, with all his ease of speech, there was something to warn one from taking premature liberties with his deeper self. I said casually: "Good-night. I only hope we shan't tread on you to-morrow morning." He said: "Why should you?" When I explained that some of us would be in the Chapel early—"Early?" he said. "What time?"

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"Six-thirty," I said.

"What for?"

"Communion."

"Well, do tread on me."

And I did.

Some months later I was on a homeward-bound leave boat when I met him again. We fell into the same mood at once, and it lasted until within measurable distance of Victoria. Then suddenly: "I say, is there a clock on Victoria station?"

"How now?" I asked, scarcely believing my ears.

"If there is one, where is it?" he insisted.

"Why?" I densely replied.

"You are a padre, and no mistake!" he said, almost angrily. "Have you never heard of meeting anyone under a clock?"

And there she was.

I never saw him again; but I heard from her subsequently, after it was over, that that last week together had been the happiest of all, and it would always remain with her. He had told her something of Talbot House, to which for his sake she is still, I think, attached.

Of H——'s earlier history I was long left ignorant; but while these pages were in proof, a message reached me through a village verger that a Mr M——, an antiquated angler, had asked him to inquire whether I still recalled his son, H——, once Captain of a famous

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School, and scholar of a still more famous College. The lonely fisherman did not wish to see me. He only wished to know. If this should come his way, here is my rough, untempered answer.

. . . . . .

As summer nights die young, so certain men stand scarcely touched by any serious darkness. We have no backward glimpse of them which does not see them shining. When we reflect upon them, we cannot find a way of saying what we mean without the use of some old phrase which mingles life and light. He who would weigh the drama of their departure may well bethink him of Sir Humphrey Gilbert, who, most unreasonably gay, hoisted his flag in the *Squirrel*, of ten tons burden. The weather rising against the fleet, the well-found ships bore down and hailed. But he, disdaining transfer, and seated with his book, cried out: "We are as near to Heaven by sea as by land." The waters broke "short and high, pyramid-wise." . . . At midnight there was a cry made. The *Squirrel's* lantern had dipped and disappeared.

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KNUTSFORD

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KNUTSFORD

GUARDSMAN, I believe, is the proper fine old title; but the service battalions did not pillory the blunder if innocently made, and Guardsman Jenkinson was neither guardsman nor private any longer when he entered, a disciplined and determined figure, on my view in April 1919. The scene of our encounter was the Piccadilly Circus formed by the converging wings of the great prison at Knutsford. The elephantine humour of its long-forgotten and forgiven architect had built this stupendous nightmare in the form of a "K," each arm of which contained upon four floors about two hundred cells.

. . . . . .

The Church of England has a sober mind for the most part; as Jacob wooed Rachel and was rewarded with Leah, so some forms of Anglicanism have pursued decorum and achieved dullness. But this preceding primness only makes the story of Knutsford all the more intriguing; and, since I find that its very name is now unknown to many, I am moved to-night to set it down.

Readers of the *Tales of Talbot House* may perchance recall that some hundreds of officers

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and men, while serving in the Salient, gave in their names in the House at Poperinghe, feeling themselves called to offer their lives, if spared, to the ministry of Christ and His Church. In 1916 this offer was first reported to the home authorities; and the Archbishops on behalf of the Church of England accepted it, together with the grave financial responsibility which such an acceptance entailed. While many of the candidates were likely to be able to provide in whole, or in part, for the costs of their subsequent training, a considerable number could not possibly hope to do so; and towards these the Church of England, with a good courage, promised that provision should be made. The fulfilment of this promise has cost no less than £423,160; but a total number of 1600 of the present junior clergy of the Church of England were thereby enabled to proceed to Orders. When the Archbishops' promise was made known to, and through, the chaplains on active service, the roll of candidates first begun in Talbot House was transferred to Bishop Gwynne's offices at General Headquarters, and many additions were made from all parts of the line and from expeditionary forces on other fronts. A few also—all too few, in view of the quality they displayed—were received from the Senior Service.

Shortly after the Armistice, leave was obtained from the Adjutant-General to establish

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in France two temporary schools for the officers and men concerned, and to gather them together from their units. The men's school was established under the command of the Rev. F. R. Barry, D.S.O., in the old Machine Gun School at Le Touquet; and the officers' school under the Rev. E. K. Talbot, M.C., at Radinghem. The men's school was staffed with a group of chaplains especially detailed for the purpose, and began the pursuit of knowledge under the oddest but most inspiring conditions shortly before Christmas 1918. No books or educational facilities were available; but necessity was the mother of invention, and well set-up squads of eager pupils filed past the Greek alphabet written, perhaps for the first time, upon the adjacent sand of the seashore. Having learned the letters, they proceeded to prove their knowledge by numbering in them and performing evolutions at which they were expert, hindered by an alphabet in which they were not. Lectures were also given of the most far-reaching character, some by instructors so learned that men rubbed their eyes, and others by educational adventurers who skated precariously across the thin crust which covered their consummate ignorance. I was myself notorious for a series of three lectures embracing the history of the world. The first ranged from the Creation to the death of Julius Cæsar; the second to the Reformation, and the

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third to the Armistice. My colleagues, however, were far better equipped, and included some far-sighted men of real capacity.

Christmas 1918 thus spent in the snow at Le Touquet, with all the implements of war laid by and allowed for the first time for four long years to stand discarded and abjured, was a spiritual experience which swept the soul of these war-weary men. It seemed that the Nativity was again within our knowledge amid those winter snows, though our voices halted as we looked back up towards the line and sang: "God rest you merry, gentlemen, let nothing you dismay."

There we had many experiences of which I cannot tell you now, but there is certainly one which must find room in this brief tale. I can see, as if it were yesterday, the astonishment of a well set-up Lance-Corporal, whose salute the Chief (F. R. Barry) returned by putting a hand on both his shoulders, and beginning to gather him in, rifle, gas-mask, pack, tin-hat and all, to the shelter of that amazing orderly-room—when at the same moment arrived the Chief of Chiefs, with all the wisdom of the wise, the courage of the Greathearts, the patience of the saints upon his eyebrows—the man who in the last resort is Christian England: Archbishop Davidson himself. He had come, as he would come, without demur and delay, to see with his own eyes the thing whereon he had set his solemn

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seal. Only he could estimate the difficulties that lay before us; only he could foretell the greater trials and pettier tribulations which would inevitably beset our path; but there he stood in the falling snow and the gathering dusk, watching serenely, and as yet well-nigh unrecognized, the unusual spectacle of a Lieutenant-Colonel, much wounded, and with many other signs of war, apparently embracing a Lance-Corporal as though the brotherhood of man had come at last upon earth indeed. Times are when my mind turns back to those three figures; and I take them as a foretaste of the thing that shall be when the Church has ceased to neglect her men. Who knows but that we even now stand upon the threshold of a time when her mystic bugles shall summon them once more to play their part in the awakening of the race to righteousness.

Soon after Christmas the impatience of the citizen armies to return to their homes, and the political pressure exercised upon those who were in no position to resist it any longer, made itself felt even in our wind-swept academy; with the result that the least valuable member of the teaching staff was sent home in haste to find an appropriate spot in England to which both sections of the school could be forthwith transferred after demobilization. Now came the moment when the pledge of the Church towards her men must be redeemed; and

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redeemed it was, in a singular yet most effective manner. The main thrust of the financial responsibility fell upon the shoulders of Canon Partridge, Secretary of the Central Church Fund. The clergy of the Church of England do not always number among their supernatural graces a capacity for co-operation; but there juts out into our whole memory of this period, as the decisive factor which made Knutsford possible, the formidable figure of this most remarkable man. Just as John Macmillan, now Bishop of Dover, and George Bell, now Bishop of Chichester, had in 1916, and the two succeeding years, codified, clarified and carried the whole plan on paper, so it now fell to Partridge to produce the money for it. And produce it he did, with a zest, penetration and buoyant humour which never lagged throughout the whole undertaking. Nor would the story be complete unless a true tribute were also paid to the Bishop of Chichester (as he then was), to Canon Hicks, the present Bishop of Gibraltar, and all who worked with them in the enormously responsible tasks of the Service Candidates Committee.

In January 1919 I therefore crossed on urgent leave to England, reported to the Archbishop and to Canon Partridge, discovered Dr Leonard Browne[1] who had been invalided home a year before, and set off with him on an odd enterprise, the object of which was nothing less

[1] First Honorary Treasurer to Talbot House, 1916-1917.

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than to find, at the shortest possible notice, a site or building of some kind in which a school of men five hundred strong might be appropriately housed and taught. Now began a series of wild-goose chases in a full tide of comedy. We heard tell of a camp at Winchester. Thither we proceeded; and found ourselves adrift on the main road to Hursley. Our objective was an American camp on the right-hand side of the road behind a hedge. When I last[1] passed that quiet field there was no sign to show that it had ever deserted its pastoral allegiance, except that in one corner a semi-military barn yet stood, brooding upon past greatness. When we reached the spot on that distant winter day, early in 1919, it was in serio-comic turmoil; for we were not the only nation whose soldier-citizens were eager to make for home. The sentries had disappeared, but a courteous Corporal, in tortoiseshells, sauntered over with us to the officers' mess. We were offered the camp "right now" on the sole terms that the boat in which our men arrived might head across the Atlantic. But England was England still; and the rights of property remained to be observed. We went in a cheerful body to the owner of the field, whose mind had swung peacewards to some purpose. No other thought would suit him than that the field should be a field again within the shortest possible period.

[1] 1928.

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Returning from this and other like adventures in the south to London, we reported our failures. Time was getting on, and some decision must be made. It occurred to me, therefore, that a wider body of practical advisers might well be assembled, and I bethought me of the most distinguished men whom I could claim in any sense to know among the awe-inspiring dynasts of Whitehall. From these there came by urgent summons certain high civil servants of great good will, and to them, after lunch, our problem was propounded. He from the Home Office rejoined that many buildings lay at their disposal, and some were wholly empty. I inquired as to their character. His reply was that a number of prisons, together with a few asylums, were standing vacant. " Prisons," I said meditatively. " I think I can understand that; but asylums? You surely don't mean . . ." " Yes," he replied, " our prison business is in a very poor way at present, and as for the asylums, we don't really expect to fill them until the General Staff is demobilized." " Well," said I, " I think we'll have a prison, if you please."

Armed with the necessary passports, we proceeded by a late afternoon train to Knutsford. It had been seasonable in Cheshire, and when we finally achieved the station we were the only passengers to print our questing footsteps upon the platform snow. The time was not far short of midnight when we found a policeman and

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asked our way to the prison. "Prison?" he said, focussing his lantern on us; "you'll find that soon enough, if you're not careful." Assuring him of our good faith, we thought it best to ask another destination for the night, and inquired for any hostelry which would have us in. His reply, so far as I remember, was that there were two: the "Angel" kept by Mr George, and the "George" kept by Mr Angell.

It is impossible to recapture, still less to convey, the complete insouciance of the outlook which then possessed the soul of a man returning to the Old Country of his dreams. Nothing was petty then; and every prim absurdity was a fresh cause for laughter and rejoicing. We were as Scrooge when he awakes from his prodigious course of nocturnal instruction: "I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy, I am as giddy as a drunken man." Knutsford, as it stood revealed on the following morning, fascinated us completely. Here was England, neither north nor south, nor east nor west; but England unqualified and unconditioned, slow to receive strangers, placidly polite, caring nothing as to what they thought of it, ashamed as to any curiosity aroused within it concerning their indubitably improper intentions. Knutsford had, moreover, a high street and a low street. The first boasted its name, the second would have repudiated it; but, between the High

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Street and the Low, little lanes of understanding ran up and down in a wayward but attractive manner. Here, indeed, was the Church of England itself set forth in solid parable.

We made our way to the prison, and found it occupied for the most part by conscientious objectors, of whom we were told that a few were frauds and a few sheer saints. The strange place fascinated us from the first, and then and there, provided the authorities on both sides confirmed our judgment, we found the goal of our endeavour. Dr Browne returned to London, and I to France.

A few weeks later the two schools at Radinghem and Le Touquet were sent home, under the education category, for immediate demobilization, and after a month's holiday reassembled as one body at the prison gates. The conscientious objectors had also been disbanded, and the prison awaited us in its native state of gloom. Peace conditions had so far been restored that a strike of plumbers was already in progress. Now plumbing happened to be needed, if for no other reason than that the dingy gas-jets, intended to make the darkness visible in every cell, were placed in a recess outside each cell with a strong pane of frosted glass between them and the occupant. Study in cells was thus impossible, and as there were no lecture-rooms or libraries, all use of books was at a standstill until the position of these lights could be

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remedied. This kind of problem, which to-day would be sufficient to cause an educational establishment to wring its hands and question Providence, could be taken in a stride by men accustomed for four years to every kind of emergency. Tools were out in a twinkling, the glass removed in five hundred cells, pipes laid and bracketed, and all was snug and complete. A bad joint would almost inevitably have meant suffocation of a pupil by gas poison, but no such incident occurred. One comic feature, which their tools could not remedy, was due to the locks upon the cell doors. These, if the doors were shut with less than care, confined the student to his narrow quarters until a search-party or starvation came to him. Plank beds were voted hard, even with blankets over them, and bit by bit they were replaced with something more inviting. The commissariat, until staffed with a wonderful body of W.A.A.C.'s, was crude in the extreme. There was no playground but the prison-yard until the summer, when Knutsford neighbours had proved the school and found it to their liking. From that time onwards local kindnesses never flagged.

The execution-house was locked, but to men who had seen what these men had witnessed there was no morbid curiosity in such directions. Only one Greatheart, so desperately wounded that no game he loved would ever find him on the field of play again, devoted every afternoon,

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month after month, to making, with much toil, a lovely little garden above the ill-omened and unsightly place of burial, marked only on the inner wall by a series of initials and dates.

Meanwhile, the spring swept forward, so radiant in its coming to these men that they could scarcely credit it for joy. Year after year the coming of spring in Flanders had meant the lifting of an ominous curtain which hung before another awful period of wounds and death and all but unendurable affliction; there had not been a man upon that whole battle-line who did not know within his heart that either he or those beside him would never see the new green leaves turn brown. Now we were free, as men delivered from a furnace, to come and go about the lanes of Cheshire and test the rights of way, whose use establishes the ancient liberties of the common people.

From now onwards the academic grove was eagerly frequented. Old army huts for lecture-rooms sprang up upon the gravel of the exercise-yard; the staffs, collegiate and culinary, were alike reinforced, and the buzz of mental machinery was heard on all hands. The school at an early stage had been divided by the Principal into a series of Houses, known by no more romantic names than the lettering on that part of the prison which they occupied. My own House, numbered B. IV., and situated on the top landing at the foot of the upright of the

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letter K, was typical of the rest. It embodied among its twenty members (if my memory serves me) a Colonel, a Naval Commander, a few junior officers, a Quartermaster-Sergeant, and some other N.C.O.'s, together with Privates and Riflemen. On parade (for most were still in kit) they were a strikingly diversified spectacle, many with the signs of detected valour upon their tunics. They had been asked to elect a Captain of the House, and had chosen with one accord a Rifleman of the London Rifle Brigade, now a chaplain in Pretoria, after a period of quiet and wonderful work with prison problems elsewhere in South Africa. Another member of my House, a very live Lance-Corporal, with a military medal contrasting oddly with his apparent childhood, is now playing a great part in the leadership of Toc H in a great British dominion. Three of the twenty have died, either of wounds, or of unsuspected strain. Ex-Servicemen are by now coming to suspect that they are not likely to be a long-lived generation; the awful privilege of their early achievements has taken from most of them more than they even yet fully realize. Quite half of the surviving members of B. IV. are now with the Church overseas, and the rest, for the most part, at work on the home frontier, where real and vital Christianity needs men of mettle to stand against the inroads of white heathendom and the subsequent collapse of all that England is.

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To-day the Knutsford School is no longer housed in the old prison. When the Assembly of the Church decided in 1922 that financial stringency forced it to abandon this great stronghold, and to withdraw its central grants towards its maintenance, we, who loved the principle of wide and honest access to the ministry, for which the school most clearly stood, thankfully accepted an offer from Mr Henry Gladstone, and set up a smaller Knutsford at Hawarden. Here, as a purely civilian enterprise, the noblest improvisation which any portion of the Church of God conceived and carried through, as a spiritual corollary to the war, is now steadily forgathered. They go thence to the universities and theological colleges, for the teaching given at the school is purely a preliminary training. Knutsford's first men stand robustly to their tasks in a wide field, and hold its memory sacred.

All this time, since the initial paragraph, I have kept Guardsman Jenkinson waiting, in April 1919, in Piccadilly Circus, where the K of Knutsford Prison meets. It was surely indicative of the true scope and outlook which the school embodied that Jenkinson should be, as he most certainly is, an honoured Knutsford man. His knowledge, principles and intentions were simple and direct. He desired a course of sound education in a good Christian atmosphere. He had no intention or purpose of proceeding to

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Ordination; his task was to remain in the ranks, and remain he would. Steeled to a school of wholly uncritical Christianity, where everything is literal and literally to be obeyed, he said good-bye when he had learned enough, and passed into the lifelong service of the Heart of Africa Mission. Thence from time to time long letters come from him, and are shared by medium of a cyclostyled sheet among old Knutsford friends. I cannot close this chapter without a sense of unworthiness towards the paragraph which follows. This extract is taken from his latest letter, which describes in the most unpretentious way the travels, trials and teachings of these men.

"At the end of our third week, out we came to the village of Makedi, where a Gospel light has been kept burning in the midst of much darkness for many years. The last time we were here it was necessary to draw attention to the badly kept state of the place, and we were delighted to find that this had been remedied. The leader of the church has just passed through a time of trial. His son, Fataki, who was a bright Christian youth, died suddenly at Poko just after returning from a visit to his father. It is such occasions as this which Satan uses to undermine the faith of these people, but praise God His grace has been sufficient for Makedi, and, as far as we can see, it has strengthened his faith.

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We spoke words of cheer to him and he replied that his sorrow only made him put his eyes towards heaven more and gave him more desire for the blessed hope of all believers. On the shed which is the village church, there is a notice in Fataki's writing reading thus, when translated: 'This house is a house for prayer to God and a place to read. I am Fataki, a slave of Jesus.' Then follows John iii. 16, written out. We believe that Fataki's witness in his village has been blessed of God and he has now been taken to serve Him day and night. Such fellows are ill spared, for they are all too few and we are in constant need of them. This place ought to have a suitable teacher immediately.

"Will you pray that the Holy Ghost will definitely call and separate some to this work? Upon our return to Nala we intend (D.V.) to commence a class for instructing those who hope eventually to become teachers. Luke x. 2, Ephesians iii. 20-21."

Who is there who cares at all and is yet unresponsive to so unfeigned a story? Would to God that some fingers still in Flanders might write Fataki's definition upon the door of every church in England.

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HERBERT FLEMING

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HERBERT FLEMING

The substance of a sermon preached in the R.M.A. Chapel, Woolwich, at the dedication of the "Herbert Fleming Lamp and Casket."

WHEN "the Shop" went out to its age-long battle with Sandhurst on 17th November 1927, an elderly clergyman was taken ill upon the touch-line and died in the pavilion. Another clergyman, his friend, was during that day in the thick of a Midland tour. That night there was a meeting of some fine and faithful fellows in the Potteries, from which we came home riotously to the Birmingham House of Toc H at one in the morning. A standing supper began in high spirits, when I found that the kitchen was emptying silently. I stood menaced by I knew not what. My brother padre of Birmingham came to me with an open buff envelope. I took it, read it, found it incredible, knew it to be true, stumbled out, groped my way down to the cellar Chapel, and cried like a child. That is all I remember.

I am afraid this is awkward to listen to: it is not easy to read aloud. But it is important that every gentleman-cadet and every member

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of Toc H in Woolwich town should know what comradeship between men can come to mean. Kinship in a great cause is the worthiest fact of human experience. No other form of wealth can compare with it. Such fellowship is life indeed. Many of you have never seen Fleming. It is difficult to remember that. You must take him on trust, as he would have taken you. Soldier, sportsman, friend of man, and servant of God: he was all this compellingly, and all the more compellingly for a certain quiet way, which was never prim. This man loved "the Shop" with a steady flame of allegiance, and prayed for it twice a day for twenty years. All that is best in the spirit you inherit and maintain owes much to those prayers.

Both in actual priority and in reputation he was well-nigh the first padre in Flanders. As Stanley traced Livingstone in darkest Africa by questioning the wayside natives he had healed, so rumours of Fleming reached us all through the talk of men who had found God through him. My own first actual sight of him was on the old canal bank at Ypres; he stood there curiously habited in a tucked-up cassock, breeches, and gum-boots, radiantly happy, and wiping his gold spectacles, during a shelling which I then mistook for the end of the world. His example did as much as any to break the belief that chaplains should not share danger.

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But Fleming was no fire-eater. He was the soul of consideration to the newest fellow-chaplain; and was never guilty of that discourtesy towards other clergymen which the minister who prides himself on manliness may so readily display. One scrap of Fleming's proverbial wisdom lingers on in my memory to explain his habit of mind. "God," he once said, "is not content with loving people. He positively likes them."

Let me tell you one more true story of him, a recent one, in peace-time. A year ago he went down to a local political meeting and slipped in at the back of the hall. Next to him was a most embittered heckler, whom, after many transgressions, the stewards came down to remove. The man, preparing defiantly to resist, found the hand of an elderly clergyman upon his shoulder. There was a friendly feel about it, and he instinctively sat down. Then came the stewards like avenging angels; to whom Fleming said gently: "There is really no need to do anything; I'll be responsible for my neighbour's behaviour now." And when the meeting ended quietly he said to the interrupter: "Thank you for not letting me down. By all means come and see me some time, if you care to." That and no more; he knew that it is fatal to press an invitation on an Englishman. The man, left wondering with a written address in his hand, is now embittered

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no longer. I may not say more than that he is to-day as keen a Christian as a man can be without actually becoming a churchwarden.

Such then was Herbert Fleming. Let " the Shop " cherish his memory and maintain his Lamp. God gave him to this place, at a time when most men here were soon to die. The padre helped them so to live that they both lived and died cleanly and in the faith he loved. Let his name dwell on with you along with the memory of those who knew his worth. Neither you of the Royal Regiment, nor you, my brothers of Toc H, can have a truer code than so to live that such a man should approve your actions; and when my own picket is relieved, Fleming's is the first hand of all that I shall seek to grasp.

This is an unusual congregation, even for this place of many memories. Privilege and lack of it, pride of birth and poverty, ability and simplicity are met together to-day. Yet his Lamp in our midst unites us all. The world does not stand still. Juniors become seniors. Staffs change and retire. So also with Toc H, the very purpose of which is to transmit a fellowship of men who watch for their Lord. Fleming loved Toc H as truly as he loved " the Shop." He did not love it less. He could not love it more.

In those dark days when England had a King in exile it was customary for men at

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wine to pass their glass across the finger-bowl. When you next come to your Communion, remember not only the Master, but His servant now with Him. " He was a Lamp that burned and shined; and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light."

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A MAN GREATLY BELOVED

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A MAN GREATLY BELOVED

I TURN from this bewildering generation to tell the story of a man whose cast of character was well known to me; for all our days, from boyhood up, were friendly. Under the shadow of his death I wrote my memory of him; but in a hap of war the pages were all lost; so that I shall now be feeling not only for the man but for the manuscript. What I then said I have forgotten; but him I shall not forget, were my life longer than I anticipate; for, more than any other, his ways and mine lay interwoven.

We were at school together, mere day boys, to and fro. Picture us then, two small preparatory schoolboys, unkempt to the verge of infamy, each with a satchel loaded with the lower rungs of knowledge. Pendlebury and Pantin, Gepp and Arnold, Blouet and Maclear, formed (when thus concentrated) a ready and well-weighted weapon, with which emphasis might be imparted to any wayside prohibition. The two small consorts held their course together to catch the confluence of the tide set schoolwards, not dawdling until the corner of Auriel Road was reached, whence the great

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face of the school clock could be seen, and the period of permissible delay assessed. Picture their respective fathers, ten minutes later, hurrying more methodically for the smoky passage of the Metropolitan; and you have the only form of "Forty years on" to which most town boys are predestined, until we discover the Empire; and at the present rate we shall not discover the Empire until we have lost it.

True, we had our episodes of excitement, which our fathers could hardly share. With seventeen as our united ages, there was one afternoon the startling intelligence that a diabolical boy, named Hardy, had been provoked into the murder of a policeman exactly opposite the Kensington Stores. Under the convenient cover of last night's fog he had buried his victim with dispatch, and the paving-stone which he had prised up for the purpose of the interment was manifestly uneven. We inspected it with some deliberation. At school prayers that very evening Hardy was (so our friend told us) to be publicly birched and expelled, and handed over forthwith for execution to a detachment of policemen still surviving, and eager to avenge their colleague. Cecil and I faced these facts together at the ages of nine and eight. Nothing, we dimly felt, from what we knew of Hardy, would so well become him in his twelve years of life as his leaving of it. I think we were first drawn

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closely and consciously together in the shadow of this astounding crime; and though, as time drew on, it appeared that the police had not missed one of their number, the dark secret of his disappearance was faithfully kept, and shared by none but the two of us. A small boy's first self-discipline is his iron code of keeping a secret against all comers.

In school-work, later on, Cecil and I were not much together. Our sea-routes separated on either side of that Equator which girds the sultry climes of education. Mine led me to the more temperate zone of Mediterranean lore and literature. His lay across the thirsty sands of "stinks": but out of hours we still were one; and learned our London side by side, one fat boy and one freckled. The freckled one led always, for he had already begun to develop a bump of locality which reduced policemen to stammering ineptitude, and an adaptability for the colour of his circumstance which was as a cloak of inoffensiveness to his insatiate curiosity. Few pilgrims can hope to invade London more intimately than two schoolboys with their Saturdays to spare. Boys in school caps will naturally behave themselves; but it is the function of the schoolboy to follow all clues to information, and to run short of pennies in the process. Under these conditions, we proceeded at our leisure to make London more or less our own, from Richmond down

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to Rotherhithe. Avoiding its churches and its public monuments, unless sufficiently supplied with tortuous stairs and dizzy balustrades, we concentrated on the second-hand shops, the stations and the shipping.

Years after, these habits had landed us in a method of summer holidays so peculiar that it may be worth recording. Cecil had gone straight from school into London life and labour, and was the industrial equivalent of a jackeroo in a family affair—the manufacture of paint in Plaistow. From this an annual fortnight at first, and subsequently three weeks, was ample holiday, which for nine successive years we never failed to spend together. Our method was meticulous. So many holidays (we felt) were spoiled by over-planning. A man decides where he will go, what it will cost him, what luggage he can have for convoy; and all the doors of chance are barred and bolted. Our plans, however, never varied. We would visit the world for a fortnight with five pounds.

On the day of our departure—usually on a Saturday—we would lunch together at the Cheshire Cheese. Thereafter we would visit in order those termini which owned trains running to a seaport. If no train were ready we were forbidden by our code to linger; but shook the dust of such delay from us, and made our way to the next station; until finally we should surprise in the act of starting a train

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that would conveniently convey us to the coast. A train boarded in motion meant a peculiarly good beginning. Failing all other fortune, there was always the Pool, with its fast fish-carriers from the Dogger Bank, or its General Steam and Batavier Boats for Rotterdam and Antwerp. By such devices we found our way to Spain, or Scheveningen, and once for a fortnight's trawling on the North Sea. Our longest took us to Turnu Severino, far below Vienna, for £2 17s. 6d., with a bedroom, built of packing-cases, all up the Rhine, and a motley medley of nationalities all down the Danube; our shortest holiday in mileage was the delivery of a motor-boat from Oulton Broad to Poole.

This last episode was characteristic of Cecil, and should have a couple of paragraphs to itself. Times were hard with us in 1910, and a long journey not to be thought of. Cecil had therefore secured by private treaty a commission to convey a thirty-foot motor auxiliary boat, decked-in forward, from its owner at Yarmouth to its purchaser at Poole. The first tidings I had of this was a summary wire: "s.s. *Sayonara* Oulton Broad bring alarum clock bunch bananas." Equipped with these explicit instructions, I made my way to Lowestoft and my purchases on arrival. With the alarum clock all going in a small square cardboard box, and the bananas also suitably

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disguised, I spent some time searching for the *Sayonara* at the sea-end of Oulton Broad. Failing there, and in the gathering dusk, I came to the sea-jetty itself, along which many craft were moored. On the jetty stood a constable, with his East Anglian mind filled—had I but known it—with William Le Queux and *The Daily Mail's* prognostications of an East Coast invasion. (I would not blame him for the world: by now, who knows?) He asked my business. I explained the object of the search; but he was resolute that no such boat lay normally beneath his charge. I volubly insisted on my hope; and together we moved far out along a jetty that I might hail a boat which I believed to be the *Sayonara*. From the very edge of the quay I hailed it, when suddenly the brown-paper parcel in my left hand became vibrant with another voice. The throaty notes of an unsuspected alarum, muffled by a box secreted in brown paper, are an alarm indeed. The constable gripped me by the collar, prepared in a moment to precipitate the spy and his petard into the profundity of ocean. With the aid of the telegram, a visiting card, and something more seductive—I am not in the habit of buying my acquittal in beer—I succeeded in escaping, but I have wondered in the years between what that policeman ultimately believed. Myself, I took train to Harwich, where I found the *Sayonara* at last,

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and reached her in a collapsible canvas dinghy, which took two to hold it open, while a third man paddled hard.

A week of wet weather, and we were still anchored in the Orwell. Even Cecil's spirits were not proof against inaction; and nothing would content him but a vow taken then and there that we would board the Hook boat that night and see where it might lead us for a few days, while the weather had time to improve. The conditions of this escapade were stringent. We were to visit as many countries as we could keep awake for; we were not to close our eyes from landing until the homeward run; we were to order no food except omelets, and not to repeat the same variety. On Thursday we came back, having visited Holland, Belgium and Germany, having consumed twenty-one omelets in the process, and bringing with us a complete change of weather. The next morning, on a falling sea, we pushed out across the Rolling Grounds for the Thames Mouth, Cecil emerging from time to time from his tending of the petrol engine to be sick each side of the boat alternately. I have met other men who are good sailor-men but bad sailors: I have never met another who could laugh at the acme of his undoing.

You may have gathered by now that he was furnished with some queer accomplishments for a town-bred fellow. Scouting was scarcely

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born, but he would have walked through any test with honour; and in him humility was so sincere as to be utterly unconscious. His humdrum work he had accepted as his duty, and schooled himself in technical efficiency. But far beyond these exactitudes of his trade, he had touched in his prehensile mind whole shores of information on the subjects which are the rarities of general knowledge. We may laugh too readily at the little books of popular learning which once reposed at a respectful distance from the Family Bible. But the ease with which the human voice now travels does not mean that the thing said is more worth the saying; and " Geography and the use of the Globes " was a more painstaking method than any we dare to employ to-day.

Cecil was primly conscientious in many of his ways; and never abated the habit of intelligent questioning. He read travel and exploration widely, and with no literary prejudices whatsoever. His self-taught astronomy was first-rate; I remember this verdict once from a competent amateur to whom I took him. Poetry he had never plumbed; philosophy was " out of my line altogether "; art—what his sister, an artist by vocation, taught him; music—an adept on a mouth-organ; religion —you shall hear. Meanwhile, his two chief aptitudes were these: a quite extraordinary gift for spoken languages, and a habit of

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physical energy which had the whole nerve of the man behind it.

As for his gift of tongues, he had lived for a while both in France and in Germany; and for him to live without learning was unthinkable. Out of school he was the most persistent scholar; and his mind was always at the ready, to piece together fragments and arrest the key-word of an unfamiliar conversation. To French and German he added, by this means, some Dutch, some Spanish, more than a little Italian, a few words of modern Greek, and a smattering of Rumanian and of Russian. You know the clever fellow who can do nothing with a music score but whose deft fingers never fail to find the chords for an accompaniment? Cecil was just such a one in his improvisations on the babel of Europe. He would puzzle over a patois for the first five minutes, and then launch out, laughing—as always—at his own mistakes, with a growing wonderment in the tones of his interrogator. I can see him thus, in sand-shoes, crumpled trousers, and an old blue jersey, gossiping with a shepherd, talking Catalan, on our way to Andorra, and joking with the Turkish sentries on the strange river-island of Ada Kaleh. Of all this, he thought nothing; but he would listen with admiration to his companion's laborious conversation in the worst dog-Latin, with a courteous Canon of Estergom Cathedral.

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Physically, he was insignificant, but with a lifelong habit of pure pertinacity. Once or twice I have seen him exhausted, but I have never known him beaten. By the side of my discreet timidity he had no nerves, and never leaned to creature comfort. Yet in all things not essential—when there was no utter necessity to push on—he would give way without a word of comment to the sedentary wishes of his unwieldy companion.

To Cecil, life was one huge game, a series of surprises. Entertainments wearied him. It meant so much sitting still. And he was not one by nature who needed the box office to provide him with the wherewithal of humour or romance. People to-day of all classes seem to assess the fun they are having by the money they are spending on it. With Cecil, cheapness was no fetish, but just part of the fun. Athletics had little interest for him. If made to play a game, he would do so with good temper and some native skill; but wind and weather, and all things that moved in earth and sea and sky, exulted him; and Mr Greatheart would have loved him surely, for he would have found him, like Mr Valiant-for-Truth, "a man of his hands."

I remember one Easter Monday at my home, new built in the New Forest, when the choice lay between tennis, which he had no time for, and gardening, which I knew he

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loathed. Now Cecil was ready for anything, from pitch-and-toss to manslaughter. The day had been an ideal one hitherto. At five o'clock that morning he had remembered that there were other ways of travelling the distance between London and Beaulieu than by train, and had already bethought himself of the ruins of what had once been a car on the reconstruction of which he had been busy in his spare time. This object, named (if I remember rightly) " Collapsible Charlie," he had pushed into the road; he had then coaxed it with white magic to cover one hundred miles by Bank Holiday breakfast-time.

My father, knowing Cecil's temperament, prescribed the digging of a ten-foot well behind the tennis lawn. Cecil agreed with eagerness; but, as the day was hot, suggested to me privately that digging was an art as old as Adam, and that there were more effective ways of making holes. Dynamite, for example, blew downwards; and an adjusted charge would save time and please the village. Had I any dynamite about me? Well, as I hadn't, the next best thing was to obtain its constituents from three chemists, not too adjacent, and compound our own. It would save time in the long run and do the job neatly. I argued vainly that the nearest chemist was six miles away, and that all shops were shut. He pointed out that if the well was urgent, the dynamite

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to urge it became also a matter of urgency. We were justified in knocking up any chemist on such a mission, though its actual nature could not be disclosed. We positively started, and ran the wreck to Lyndhurst. Within the chemist's shop, behind the dull light of drawn blinds, Cecil asked blandly for constituent number one. The thing was not in stock, and with polite distress Cecil emerged crestfallen to coax the contraption home. From tea-time onwards, I can see him slaving to make up for lost time. Far into the spring night, with the aid of one spluttering headlight and a stable lantern, we dug our pit in the light gravel. At eight feet or so, we came on water, sank a box to bind it, and had a midnight supper then and there with a tin of sardines and some Oliver biscuits; which feast concluded, Cecil drove through the night to work at Plaistow next morning.

The deeper things than surface wells, what can I say about them? We were confirmed together, and when we parted, afterwards, I fear I only remember Cecil saying: "Oh! I forgot. Our cat had kittens yesterday!" But perhaps, as Talleyrand averred, words are chiefly given us to conceal our state of mind. I am writing of my friend, not as a tract, but truly; and would not claim for him a meditative grasp of the unseen which was not in his nature. He had beliefs, and lived them more

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forcibly than most of us. But church once again meant stillness, and time consumed with nothing tangible to show. In my early days of fervour I would take him with me; but when I went to Oxford he found himself part owner of a small racing yacht at Richmond, and spent his week-ends at the Canoe Club. At this stage of our friendship I was in no condition to point him skywards, for by my second year at Oxford I was myself adrift, and could hardly complain that he was riding more and more loosely at his moorings. My real distress was that the tide under him was shallowing; for a life aground in littleness is in a far sadder state than any soul far out on the high seas.

Cecil's work at the time was irksome beyond his utterance. He was by now in that intermediate position where he had responsibility without authority. Blame reached him undiluted, but credit scarcely filtered down so far. The more extensive the concern, the more common is this stage of petty suffering; and it is corrosive rather than disciplinary to the eagerness of a junior who has set himself to his career in earnest. We do not know what bitterness of spirit politely cashes our cheques, or renders our accounts with rubber compliments. Anticipating legislation, the firm had gone forward to provide a range of baths for their workmen, whereby the ill effects of the various processes of paint-manufacture might be dis-

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counted. The baths were in a range of cubicles, with a catch to each door, securing privacy for the occupant. These catches gave Cecil a pernicketty problem; for some of the older workmen, indifferent to industrial hygiene, would shut their doors, and seat themselves for a statutory period beside their baths, engaged with pipe and newspaper. The English temper reacts against the ethics of precaution—more especially when the grandmotherly edict is administered by a junior subaltern. How well we learned it later! But, at the time, Cecil was finely frenzied over it, blamed by both sides, and humorously desperate.

By this time I had attached myself to the tail of that most Christian comet which led far wiser men to Bermondsey. Neither *Across the Bridges* nor *A Student in Arms* had yet been written, but the Franciscan figure of Dr Stansfeld had passed, like the Pied Piper, through the 'Varsity, and bidden us to the Boys' Clubs at "Dockhead," "Gordon," and "Decima." Myself, I could contribute nothing to the spirit of that spot, and was as much out of place as an American arriving at Ober-Ammergau by aeroplane. But one thing Bermondsey owes me. I took Cecil down there for his first few visits. The only non-Oxford man at the time enlisted, he was shy (as he could be) at the beginning; but after a few post-mortems on the leg of mutton at

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Riley Street, and the discovery of some of his own boy-messengers in the clubs, I was only a clog in the proceedings. Men yawned at the Canoe Club, once his haunt, and wondered after him. His bed at home, ornamented with the text, " Nicht Hinauslehnen," once stolen on a jaunt in Germany, knew him less regularly than ever; and high in a half-crown attic, sublimely and insecurely perched beside the Pool, he set up with some others a most *al fresco* establishment, with sardines and sundry sausages, and milk fetched in your shirt-sleeves from a shop secreted among the warehouses and tanneries.

Si monumentum requiris, circumspice. Most of his club boys died in the same war as he, and yet I fancy it will be some while yet in Bermondsey before his memory is clean gone for ever. Naïve to the verge of imbecility, spontaneous and unstudied, his utter identification with their moods, their jests and jeers, their heroism and humour, endeared him to them with less impediment than any. He stood alone among his brother-workers, more capable, more brilliant than he, as having no theory to explain, no moralizing axe to grind, no notes to take, no book to write, no categories of conduct to assess. Alone, again, in that he knew more than a little of their working conditions by first-hand experience, the insecurity of their tenure, the ugly menace of a curt dismissal when the end of the blind alley is reached. As

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a social worker, the undergraduate has an *élan* all his own; but it was Cecil who first showed me that a city need not rest all its boys' work on the student classes. Maybe we ask too much of them, and tempt them to lay their gifts on every wayside altar. Once win the city's sportsmen, the honourable train-bands, the juniors of the West; and not a boy in Bermondsey or Bow need lack the friend he needs.

The rest is best said quickly. In September 1914 Cecil went out as an interpreter, and took part in the Retreat from Antwerp. From the Interpreters' branch he was transferred to Ordnance, and thence again to Railway Transport. In eighteen months he rose from "checker" to second-in-command at Calais, whence once or twice he came to Poperinghe to see me. Once I repaid his visits, and found myself beside him one dark night emerging from an inspection of Dunkirk Docks. The old French sentry challenged us, and went so far as to enforce his demand for the password with a levelled bayonet. Cecil, quite unperturbed, leaned forward lightly, and, with a courteous apology, unhooked the old man's lantern from his waist-belt. With the other hand he extracted from his pocket a schoolboy's collection of tram-tickets and string; for on the corner of one tram-ticket he had written the password for the day. This with becoming gravity he then pronounced, returning the

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lantern and the saving ticket to the astonished Territorial. Thus we passed out together.

His pen was never active privately; and I have no letters of this time save one, which ends with the arrival of the mail-boat, " rolling so much that the stamps must be coming off the envelopes "—a trope, I think, his own.

By this time the comparative safety of his work had grown more and more insufferable. He applied for leave to join the Air Force, and was refused as indispensable. At last persistence had its way. He dropped two stars with joy, and carried his marvellous nerve and eyesight, his skilled cartography, his delicate delight in every trick and mood of high-powered engines—and they have many—to his last episode of war. In half the usual time he was a certified observer. Then followed his pilot's wings, though over the official age to gain them. From a crash upon the Somme he was taken up for dead, and only asked " who's been turfing over the sky? " He had fallen the last few feet free of his machine, upon his face. Returned to England, and rallying marvellously, he was appointed instructor and flight-commander at a western station, never losing the life of a pupil. One autumn day in 1917, when I was home on leave, he flew over with three other single-seaters to see me. One pupil made a poor descent into a field, studded with pensive cows and ringed with trees. Cecil

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first strafed, then laughed, then climbed into the cockpit and flew the solo somehow to its proper berth. Later we said good-bye; and something in his mien then told me that it was likely to be good-bye indeed.

Once more he forced his way to France, joining this time the terribly honourable Night-Flying Corps. On 16th May 1918 he piloted a great new Handley-Page to bomb submarine bases at Bruges. Caught in some cunning wires, they crashed to earth; and were dragged dead and dying from the wrecked fuselage to make a photograph so fearful that, when I saw it, six months later, a friend had to walk me to and fro far into the night till kind exhaustion quieted me. Two days after his death the German Air Force took possession, and buried them near Captain Fryatt in the Steinbrugge Cemetery of Bruges.

Though for four years of war in bondage with her children, no grave hurt was done to the sweet city of the Counts of Flanders; and for those of us who were stationed in the Salient the thought of Bruges lying beyond the desolation was a faint parable of Paradise. Then, in 1919, Bruges was Paradise regained, and year by year our ever-growing pilgrimage from among the household of Toc H would find its way thither, to the Panier d'Or, coaxing gendarmerie to a kindlier tolerance of the final "Auld Lang Syne" in the Grand' Place.

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But our true trysting-place was in the military area of the cemetery, where, among hundreds of neat *Unterseebooten* graves, there stood the crosses of Cecil and his companions. To-day they are there no longer; they are a trifle nearer home. If you would find them now, you must pick your way down from Hill 60, by the side of the tiny railway. Ten minutes' stumbling will bring you to a narrow strip of almost English greensward, where, with no great concourse round him, the form of my best friend lies hid. If his spirit is still the same, if he has not (like Browning's tortured saint) " forgot it all," there must be a little thrill of laughter that they should have laid him—a good railwayman in his time—so near that most placid of created things, a Belgian branch-line.

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THE UPPER ROOM

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THE UPPER ROOM

I

GRANT me that note again!
Spirit, who gave!
That sweet and sober strain,
That lifting stave!
I cannot buy, for nought is mine.
Do Thou give free that chant divine.

II

Ah! I have lost it sheer!
Remember nought,
Save that it voided Fear,
And inly wrought
The sight no man e'er merited
Of Hands, and Feet, and Side, and Head.

III

Now get I to my task,
The Town astir.
When I come back to ask,
Wilt Thou confer?
One dawn I'll wake where there's no fever'd tide.
Serving I'll see then, and be satisfied.

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A CHANGED USE

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A CHANGED USE

How strange it is that Sherlock Holmes should have begotten a host of imitators, and Brigadier Gerard should remain the last of his literary line. Of the two characterizations the Brigadier is surely far more human and therefore the truer art. Which of us has not a trickle of sympathy for his out-of-date bravado, contrasting so pathetically with his seat in the corner of the café, and his scanty and unappreciative audience?

Once again his figure rises to my mind as a type and symbol of my own condition, when I put aside my ill-done duty and throw the reins upon the neck of memory. Yet it is no mere solace that I seek for myself. However petulant be our present bustling period towards the tales of more than ten years back, perchance the mood of those to come will alter. The aftermath of danger is always irksome and belittling; and man casts no glance behind him, as he steps from the great shadow to the sunlight of security. Yet the level ground once reached, he will halt betimes and turn and wonder to see how far the shadow falls, and how majestic is the crag which casts it there.

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Granted no new war comes—which God in His great love forfend—the tragedy in which Toc H was born will tower up behind us for many generations yet; and when another age shall say, "What mean ye by this legend?" others unborn will make reply more diligently than now.

This time a casual reference has set me dreaming of those tumultuous times. A friend concerned with holy things, and knowing as not many know their history, took me to task most gently for what I do so often that I have nigh forgotten its current implications. Pray do not think that he was one who watches with an embittered eye the conduct of a priest during those blessed moments when, above all, Love seeks to reign supreme. It just so happened he was kneeling near when I was standing once more at the altar, the holiest task of ministering completed, and That Which I had ministered not wholly spent. Then, as the worshippers went back, I—without further pause — consumed the Elements remaining, before the Post-Communion.

This habit was, of course, the ancient use; but in post-Prayer-Book days, and as the clergy of my period were trained, paten and cup retain their precious burdens until the final Peace has been bestowed. My friend, I say, was learned in these things—things which, to tell the truth, I think of only when rebuked.

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I had not changed my mode because an ancient fashion came again. Willing to defend myself, I told, for the first time, the circumstance which changed me; and here I set it down.

There was a time in Talbot House, in Poperinghe, when our poor quarter of the town received more than we judged its share of heavy shelling. A great new gun was searching for the broad switch road, which ran some hundred yards beyond our narrow garden. Day after day, at intervals dictated by its transit to and fro upon its railway mounting, this terrible instrument would run forward ten miles away and fire six rounds or more in quick succession. One morning early, after a night much broken, I climbed to the old chapel and found a few men waiting the Communion. My sacred task went forward until such time as He had deigned once more to manifest His Presence. They gathered to be fed by Him; and, when the last no longer hungered, they went back well content. I turned back again to the low altar[1], when suddenly, so swift and sharp that it was heralded by no fierce scream of warning, the great gun opened. The first shell skimmed the high roof above our heads, and plunged with a roar into the private field behind the garden.

[1] It was early days, and the Carpenter's Bench still stood upon its old rough serviceable setting.

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In that tense moment a strange thing took me. I made sure that the end was come; for it seemed like enough that the steep narrow house would shake, until it fell, with the explosion. The picture in my mind was this: the floor would go first, with it the benches and the altar; chalice and paten would be spilled, and all in one great heap lie tangled, smoking, disannulled, as one had often seen in the houses thus demolished. And even as I thought, the great house trembled till every crazy rafter seemed bound to sag and snap. Shells had been close before, but never quite so heavy; and in another moment the next great shell would come. My normal mood under such circumstances was full of fear: then, and then only, apart from one out-of-door experience which followed one year later, I had no fear at all. My one distress was that I seemed to see the chalice lying spilled among the ruins. I picked it up and drained it; the blessed bread likewise. The next shell came. Its line of flight was almost as before, but those fine gunners had learned that the first had fallen short of the switch-road, and given that tiny access of elevation which bracketed their target. More rounds followed, while our service ended. When the men clambered down the old companion ladder, to go about their duties, courage went from me; for it had never been mine. I had no small ado to stop myself

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from clambering after them, a frightened and unworthy man. Against this panic I struggled, and knelt down to say—if I could—my short thanksgiving.

To mark that day I then revised my mode, and pledged myself to do what I had done that morning whenever I should Celebrate. Strange that a casual word should thus enlarge my heart and prompt me to put down the reason, unspoken all these years.

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A PYX IN FLANDERS

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A PYX IN FLANDERS

I AM now to endeavour to set down in writing an experience, more sacred and more moving than any other, at least to two men who have survived.

The actual day was in the early summer of 1917, when the 154th Southampton Territorial Heavy Battery, commanded then by "Shi" (Major Herbert Shiner, D.S.O., M.C.), had moved one section forward to the field in front of Transport Farm—a deadly place indeed. It had become my custom to spend at least one day and night each week with the three batteries which were my forward flock. Pettifer and I for three years thus set out together, generally on Thursday morning, returning to Talbot House some time on Friday. It was what we called our slum visiting, and seldom passed without unexpected incidents. All sorts of units in turn lent transport to ferry our spiritual munitions to and fro. These included a baby Pathé Cinema, one or two tins of films; one sandbag holding hymn-books and Communion services; another full of mundane printed matter; my Communion case (always called the Crown Jewel

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Case), the State Paper Case, recovered recently from a sullen stream at Sheffield; sometimes Edmund Street's portable harmonium; and other human frailties, including several tins of Mrs Fry's cocoa, which were secured by influence with her gardener when wounded. Then there was sterner kit selected, according to the state of the military weather; lastly, one heart in mouth and boots alternately —Pettifer's heart was always where it is. From all this stuff we were easily separable. It sometimes went by luggage in advance and lay awaiting our arrival at No. 10 Bridge, Ypres, where the first tin of cocoa might be broached. It travelled by every method and at every speed, from the G.S. wagon or the gun-limber to the breathless luxury of Godfrey Pope's box car, or a Flying Corps tender. If we had calls to pay on the way up, we might travel with it to Vlamertinghe and then kiss it good-bye until to-morrow or some other day. The astounding thing was not that it disappeared, but that it all came home.

One thing, and one thing only, never left my person on these journeys. That was a small and simple Pyx, sent out to me for Talbot House in 1916 as the gift of the poorest street of my district in Portsmouth. It was seldom, if ever, that I carried the Sacrament from Talbot House itself towards the line. This would have been one way, and surely one which

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few would then have questioned who were in contact with the realities of war. Another thought, however, had possessed me. It was that the unity of each battery should be knit up in the use of the Pyx, hallowed by all for all.

In all three batteries many officers and men had come forward by this time for Confirmation, or had returned to their Communions. In the 154th these privileges were by now accepted by the majority. Each battery had, apart from its wagon lines which lay near Poperinghe, a Battery Headquarters in the neighbourhood of Ypres, a rear section near Headquarters, and two forward sections advanced and in constant danger.

The arrangement which by long experiment was found to meet their need most simply was this. At Battery Headquarters there would be a sort of guest night, with a cinema show, a sing-song, or a debate, or all three put together. This would be followed by an evening service on a week-night, and next morning by a Celebration, at which Communion would not only be given to those present, but prepared for communicants in the advanced sections. To these, during the day that followed, It would then be borne. I must here explain that this carrying of the Sacrament became so natural to my mind that I found no tendency to awkwardness when incidents occurred which would seem strange, or actually irreverent, on

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the journey from Headquarters to the advanced sections. I do not think that the consciousness of That which there resided became dim or unprevailing. I rather feel that the Christ Who began His ministry by making poor folk happy at their ill-provided feast was willing that Pettifer and I should turn in here and there to share a mug of tea or cocoa and to exchange good news with friends.

All this is but a clumsy preface to the most unforgettable happening of many on these journeys.

The Headquarters of the 154th were at the time recently advanced from an old farm near Dickebusch to the gaunt nightmare of St Eloi. There, opposite Bus House (where the ruins of a London bus had left the name behind them), stood the B.C. post with the rear-section gun in the field and farther ditch. Here, then, we Celebrated on this especial morning, and passed with a full Pyx down the long slope that led towards Ypres. At Transport Farm, a dressing-station, some of the 6th London Field Ambulance were then at work. We met some we knew, but it was not a place for any unnecessary delay. A hundred yards beyond—where the train from Ypres to Menin now once again crosses the southern road, and proceeds upon a small and curved embankment—there was a field filled with still smoking shell-holes. Across this field our way lay, to a

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spot in the embankment where the men of the forward section were sheltered when off duty, in the famous railway dug-outs—a series of crumbling caves dug into the embankment, and walled with great planks. We passed across this field with no shells landing near us. The subaltern in charge of the section was awaiting us, and a considerable body of men gathered within the largest tunnel. As we entered, shelling began again in close proximity, and, as some shells were by their sound gas shells, we dropped the gas curtain behind us. The Communion was then given to the officer and some N.C.O.'s and men, perhaps eighteen in all. I saw that some whom I had hoped to find were missing.

No eyes which have looked upon these things in actuality can ever hope to find their like in any church on earth. The intense reality, the humble eagerness, the unity of aim, the thought of one another, the constancy of friendship thus for ever knit, were like great shafts of light streaming upon a dark and narrow way, whereon a Figure all-commanding stood plainly to be seen. The crouching men, outlined in candlelight against the background of the oozing boards upon the yielding carpet of moist clay, made this the Food of Immortality indeed, delivered within the sepulchre itself. Death stood without and knocked, but Christ within forbade his instant entry; for, even

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as we knelt, such sounds came very near. Some minutes later and the Act was over. The officer and I went towards the entrance and put a hand upon the gas curtain. It seemed that something was impeding its movement. When at last it moved, a body, half fallen against it, lay prone at our feet. Seldom had War done his work with less disfigurement. It was impossible for either of us to realize for a moment that it was death indeed which we beheld. Then both our minds leapt to the same understanding. This lad was one for whom the officer had taken, so far as it might be, peculiar and special thought. It was due to a hint from the officer that I had been much in touch with him, and that I had a fortnight ago brought him and a few others down to Talbot House for their Confirmation. Evidently what had happened was this. He had been on duty at the farthest gun, and stayed perhaps for some adjustment behind the few that were already spared. Hoping to be in time for the Service he had then followed them, and while his friends received, had died at the entrance without a cry. The truth was evident and too sacred for any words then, or even now.

A few minutes later, when we had lifted the body and carried it to one side, so that the men coming out behind us might not see it as they came, I asked for the other absentees. These were four signallers attached to this

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section of the battery; one from the Signals Corps and the other three gunners lent to him for duty. The officer told me that they were stationed on the embankment fifty yards away. I made my way towards them, and found them crouching on the slope of the embankment where the shelling was still heavy, though intermittent. As they could not leave their instruments, the only way was to minister to them in the open. And there, upon the side of the embankment, we five men knelt down together. After a few words of the prayers, I opened the upper part of the Pyx to minister therefrom. Having done so, I felt for the tiny lock whereby the lower portion of the Pyx (this part of glass) might be freed for the second ministration.

At this moment the air immediately above our heads was filled with the bursting of a shell. We had all taken off our tin hats, and knelt there entirely unprotected. The shell burst perhaps fifteen feet up, and every bush about us was cut with flying fragments. The whole air was charged, as it seemed, with that unmistakable sound of metal whining and tearing and thudding to the ground. Not one of us was touched: I would almost say that not one of us was frightened. Completely deaf for the moment, I ministered the Cup, replaced its cover, said the Lord's Prayer, and rose from one knee to give the Peace.

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A few moments later I left them and stumbled down the slope to summon Pettifer and pass upon our way. We did this without, so far as I remember, any further incident. But what further could there be to equal those which I had witnessed in that last half-hour? Mine eyes had indeed seen His salvation.

The officer still lives, and is the other witness of at least one part of this narration. Two, if not three, of the signallers were killed later; the fourth I cannot now recall by name. I can only say once more that there is neither heightening nor self-deception in this story. For many reasons it has not previously been set down; for many other reasons it may be well that it should be set down at last.

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"THEY HELD THEIR GROUND"

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"THEY HELD THEIR GROUND" [1]

GREY broke the light of that Sabbath morn
On the English pickets,
Gold rose the sun o'er the unreaped corn
And the Hainault thickets.
Through the park at home, where the young rooks caw'd,
And the dew lay deep on the churchyard sward,
Went Mary, arisen to meet her Lord—
While Mons must be held for England.

Clear broke the day as the bugles blew—
Who shall hear them to-morrow?
Sternly the thunder of Edom grew,
And the tally of sorrow.
Right wing, left wing, centre attacked,
Legions launched like a cataract,
But the English stood to their plighted pact,—
For, Mons must be held for England!

Pitiless noon, when the screaming shard
Left the air acrid.
But they looked on Malplaquet and Oudenarde,
So the soil was sacred.

[1] See the Dispatch of Sir John French on the first Battle of Mons.

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And they thought (who knows?) on some
Surrey lane,
On some sweetheart's kiss, or some school refrain,
And they tightened the girths of their saddles
again,
Since Mons must be held for England.

Red set the sun in the angry skies
Ere the fight was over.
Fierce were the beams of the cruisers' eyes
By the cliffs of Dover.
News—ill news—for Namur is lost!
No need for the Eagle to count the cost.
But Mons was a meddesome hill at the most,
Yet Mons had been held for England.

Lord, Who hast known what a slain Son is,
Judge Thou their labour!
Lifted they eyes to the vanities?
Deceived their neighbour?
Sift Thou the souls that are utterly Thine,
Clean are those cold hands of covert design;
Silent they lie in their last long line,
Who died to hold Mons for England!

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WHENCE CAME THESE?

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WHENCE CAME THESE?

(The substance of a sermon preached in the church of Saint Mary the Virgin, Oxford, on the evening of Armistice Day, 1928.)

I WOULD read you these words from Esdras:

"I asked the angel and said, Sir, what are these? He answered and said unto me, These be they that have put off mortal clothing, and put on the immortal, and have confessed the name of God; now they are crowned, and receive palms. Then said I unto the angel, What young man is it that crowneth them and giveth them palms in their hands? So he answered and said unto me, It is the Son of God, whom they have confessed in the world. Then began I greatly to commend them that stood so stiffly for the name of the Lord."

And these from Revelation:

"What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? . . . These are they which came out of great tribulation."

Only one reason beyond old friendship moved Frank Barry to ask me here to-night. That reason was this. During the war I was an

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innkeeper, and as such became the unheroic confidant of many customers. Few of those customers came home. To-night, any link is better than none at all, and therefore I am here. I would not, if I could, turn the Great War into oratory. I can only try to tell you of my friends: if I fail completely you must forgive me, and go elsewhere for your knowledge of them, for you and they must be in touch.

I am not forgetting the years between. I am not oblivious of the fact that time does not stand still; that very few of you remember the newsboys shouting through the summer night, "Fall of Liège," "Fall of Namur"; and that many of you now grown to man's estate are yet too young to have heard the low thunder of the guns across what Cromwell called the "narrow ditch." I would have you yet remember that while we grow old, our friends are ever young. However little we understand you, they are for ever of your age, and know you through and through. My task to-night is to make that knowledge a little less one-sided, that the lessons which they learned, but did not come home to teach, may not be entirely lost. Remember, too, that those who had most to teach were least likely to come home; for such learning was dangerous in those days, and its cost fell most heavily on the most ardent students. Virtually all the natural leaders of my generation died with

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their music in them, leaving only their armour-bearers and camp-followers such as myself. Your generation is thus in the peculiar position of having little first-rate ability ten years ahead of it, and a double portion of responsibility resting upon your lives.

I shall preach no more than this, and go thus far only in the hope that you may feel it worth while to know more, not less, of them as your own hour of action comes.

The French have always said that the faculty of forgetfulness is a national failing in England. We might perhaps reply that such forgetfulness is better than bitter memories. But best of all are the memories which are not bitter, but ennobling. I would, if I may, commend to any men of your generation the *Outline History of the Great War*, recently published by the Cambridge Press, as a book especially prepared to provide in a terse and unemotional way the story of the great Valley of Affliction, which it was their task to tread, and yours not to ignore.

Our race has been busy throughout the world to-day laying its flowers upon its cenotaphs. It rests with you to lay your lives thereon. The days of sacrifice are not over. As those whom we honour took at your age the higher road, leaving the lesser men behind them, so for you a road calls which will, if you are faithful, lead many of your generation,

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not to the clear heights of historic sacrifice, but to the pits and craters where the sorrows of the world stand well-nigh unchallenged. As you look up thence, I promise you one thing. Your eyes shall catch their shining; and theirs behold with joy the light you bear, moving faithfully and steadfastly to duty in dark places. So you will not forget them; for only those who please themselves grow blind towards that light.

As I look out upon some heedless and self-pleasing lives to-day, I mind me of that terrible French story in which, a few years after the Crucifixion, Pilate has completely forgotten the incident of Jesus. When in the early months of 1920 I was sharing, so far as I dared, some of the experiences of the homeless ex-Service men in London, I passed, one night as the theatre crowds were coming out, between a jewelled person and her car. There was a block ahead which halted me for a moment. Whereupon she put a hand upon my ragged trench-coat and said to me in great disdain: "Get out of my way, you're no use to us now." God forbid that anyone should imagine that incident to be typical, which truly it was not. I only quote it to reaffirm that impatience with the upshot of that great tragedy is an ill attitude.

Here, then, are three great questions in our text. Let me endeavour to indicate some kind

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of answer. "Whence came these men?" You cannot lay a finger on a single spot, however remote, upon the British map whence they came not. From the eternal suns to the eternal snows; from veld and prairie; from the raw station hewn by their axes out of the virgin forests; from the lands where old empires sleep; from the lands where new empires dawn, these men came hurrying. I have just returned from South America, where, in the heart of Brazil, lies a territory half as big as Europe, still unexplored. On the threshold of that land, in April 1915, were six Englishmen who had heard no breath of war. When the rumour came to them, their decision was taken that same hour. They made their way thence to the coast, a journey without train or car, of fifteen hundred miles. Only two of them had ever been in England; two others could not speak a word of English. Three died in France, and three returned to lose themselves again in the vast country whither that far-questing call had come.

There is no parallel to this spirit in history. No free allegiance so far-reaching was ever before so proved. Compared with it, the awful drain of men alike irreplaceable in every walk of life in England, is a foregone conclusion. Yet stay a moment to fill your mind with the picture of the Sandringham Battalion of the Norfolk Regiment, outlined for a moment with

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their hunting horns to their lips upon the heights of Achibaba itself, and then gone for ever. Translate every village cross, so thickly sown, into its tale of men and lads who loved the place through which you pass so hastily. This hamlet was the home they thought upon; and thought on all the more as death swooped down upon them. Resolve the grand and sombre passion of the Scottish National War Memorial upon Castle Rock into those whose names it bears; and there rises before you the spectacle not of a mighty army, but of an ancient race which a hundred years of peace can scarce renew. Turn to the vast prosaic city whence I come, and see it as I left it. Bethink you, then, that if every man within it between twenty and thirty died to-night, they would not replace the men that most unwarlike city sent out in those four years. Love lies no longer bleeding, but London Pride grows faithfully beneath the murk of fifty miles of smoke.

Then turn you back to where you are, and think how it must feel to belong to a generation of Oxford which is as if it had not been; to climb old stairs once more, and to remember before door after door that the friend who lived there died before his day. I remember once discussing a particularly bad casualty list with Neville Talbot. He told me how, when he was on leave, Bishop Gore had phrased his feelings. "You imagine," said Gore, "that

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you men are suffering because your contemporaries are being killed. I have been watching one withered old Oxford don, a man of proverbial heartlessness. As his pupils, one by one, were reported dead, the old man said no word, but grew more withered still, until a few days ago he died, with few to mourn him." . . . "Whence came they?" Whence came they not?

Who are they? What manner of men? You cannot superimpose a million photographs; nor is it profitable to take a single glance at men whose very diversity was an enrichment to their common task. To forget the regular soldier is as culpable as to imagine that all men took after him. That tiny body of professional actors, drawn for the most part from the two extremities of society, sustained a small but busy portion of the stage, while every amateur was in the crowded dressing-rooms. To exaggerate the weight of that first contribution is as stupid as to minimize its importance. Ninety-five per cent. of the allied troops upon the Marne were French; yet the five per cent. were not merely hostages for the truth of our alliance, but picked and proved and competent, to the amazement of both friend and foe. Had it not been for them and what they stood for, had it not been for the unseen but unchallengeable men at sea, the stage, before any others had had time to

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reach it, would assuredly have gone down in ruins.

Outside the old asylum at Ypres there stands —or stood—a solitary French grave of October 1914, whereon some thoughtful Englishman had scratched the text: "Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed." Put yourself for a moment in the position of those who sustained the first titanic blows. Speak with any citizen of Brussels whose eyes day after day rested upon the most perfectly equipped series of armies that the world had ever seen, pouring in ordered splendour and the highest spirits, with unquestionable ardour and inflexible purpose, upon a line so thin that it seemed that the way lay open. Then estimate the spirit that sustained these few dying doggedly for the country which had starved many of them into enlisting. Gaze then upon that strange amalgam of idle rich and hungry poor, and mark within them what they gave to us who followed them. Their legacy to us was a certain spirit, composed of oddly chosen attributes, never perhaps more strangely united; duty, of course, and unobtrusive courage; a steadfastness of hoping; and a certain sane generosity of outlook, which cloaked enthusiasm beneath an air almost of neutrality. Above all, they were quick to discover the good in one another; and very seldom gave way to any cheap misjudgment of a man or motive.

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Let me have done with generalities and give a few random examples of what these phrases mean.

Economy of emotion. The old cruiser torpedoed, the captain finds himself in the cold North Sea, already sprinkled with his men. A petty officer swims up to him, and picks up something floating in the water: "Your cap, sir," he says respectfully.

Duty. No more awful duty fell to a chaplain than to prepare a condemned deserter for death upon the morrow. After it was all over, one chaplain, now far afield, found himself dazed by the amazing turn which his experiences had taken. Beginning in the evening with a sullen pagan, he had presented the firing party with a truly converted man. And at the end of that tremendous night, after Baptism and Communion had been administered, there still remained an ugly hour. This the doomed man demanded should be dedicated to a concert, with one as audience alternately. Thus for an hour they sang to one another, and sometimes both together, like Paul and Silas in prison. When the concert had done its work, and the time was bridged, the man insisted on standing stiffly to attention and singing in pure loyalty *God save the King.*

The discovery of good in one another. The last time I saw Harry Jago, he came down laughing from Vindictive Cross Roads at

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Passchendaele; and I laughed too, and looked at him to share the pride behind the laughter, when I heard the story. There was no line but shell-holes. In these the Devons lay, cut off from one another. Somehow a message must pass. A runner gets ready, and his comrades bet on him. He is out and off, and then down. Immediately from the shell-holes, a moment before low-tenanted by heartless tipsters, a reckless mob of rescuers scramble out in full-throated competition. What can be done where vice is so allied to virtue? The analytic moralist stands stricken!

When, therefore, you find upon some dusty shelf a volume of old letters, a biography of Ronnie Poulton, an anthology of soldiers' verses, do not, I beg you, turn hastily away. Read rather between the lines, and try to recapture for yourselves their great discovery of the virtues in the common men of England. "The men are wonderful," writes one of the Shrewsbury masters: "I repeat it with the most sincere reverence—there is no other word. I adore them. *They* are the people. . . ." However poor the war poets, sift through them some time for the gold. Here is one fragment from some verses by Lieutenant E. A. Mackintosh some weeks before he died:

"Oh, never shall I forget you,
My men, who trusted me:

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More my sons than your fathers',
For they could only see
The little helpless babies,
Or the young men in their pride.
They could not see you dying,
Or hold you, while you died.

Happy and young and gallant
They saw their first-born go;
But not the strong limbs broken,
And the beautiful men laid low,
And the piteous writhing bodies
That screamed: 'Don't leave me, Sir.'
For they were only your fathers,
And I was your officer."

Transfer that spirit to industry, and every Conciliation Board can be dismissed, its aim achieved.

One point, moreover, is raised in those verses which marks the man who knew. These heroical virtues were not (as some would imagine) the result of a naturally phlegmatic temperament. The town-bred Englishman at least is no longer made in those proportions. His nerves are not of iron, nor is his heart insensible to fear. The hymns of war soon faded in Flanders; and one or two true melodies replaced them. But one refrain lingered on, which sent a shiver through ten hundred thousand hearts; for it said the simple truth:

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"Oh! my, I don't want to die." Those born to courage, and hardened through years of training, have a breaking strain no doubt superior to others; but what shall we say of such as Arthur Green, my first patient of all in France; who, delicately reared, a schoolboy of an old Oxford school, preparing perhaps for Orders, a shy unathletic man, threw himself upon a bomb to save his officer? This man died slowly, limb by limb, a quiet and contented soul. They had a struggle with themselves, these men. And it is the knowledge of that struggle which marks the true record of them from the false externality which speaks only of their courage. I've sat all through the night with a good officer sobbing with fear under the presentiment that the next journey would be his last.

To ignore the reality of this inner besiegement, in which they were beset by every doubt and devil in hell, is to rob their accomplishment of its true virtue and their hard-won valour of its teaching power. Least of all, must we forget those hopeless ne'er-do-weels, who only found their souls where the darkness was deepest. Here is a word from one old Colonel's letter:

"Private X. was a man who from the first was always in trouble—really bad trouble, such as striking N.C.O.'s, etc.—and yet when there

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was any dangerous job on he was among the first to volunteer, and he ended his life in a gallant raid. Utterly undisciplined, intolerant of all authority, and yet eager for the job which he had joined the army to do, and for which he gave his life."

The Colonel goes on to say:

"They were shopmen, artisans, clerks, and scarcely one had ever handled a rifle. We had literally representatives of every trade in the country except soldiers . . . the way these men, accustomed to regular hours, meals, sleep, etc., accepted conditions, discomforts and hardships of which they had never dreamed, is an imperishable memory."

Whatever else you do not read, neglect not Donald Hankey, who rises to his full height in *Of some who were lost, and afterward were found:*

"Yet they, who had formerly been our despair, were now our glory. Their spirits effervesced. Their wit sparkled. Hunger and thirst could not depress them. Rain could not damp them. Cold could not chill them. Every hardship became a joke. They did not endure hardship, they derided it. And somehow it seemed at the moment as if derision was all that hardship existed for! Never was such a

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triumph of spirit over matter. As for death, it was, in a way, the greatest joke of all. In a way, for if it was another fellow that was hit it was an occasion for tenderness and grief. But if one of them was hit, O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory? Portentous, solemn Death, you looked a fool when you tackled one of them! Life? They did not value life! They had never been able to make much of a fist of it. But if they lived amiss they died gloriously, with a smile for the pain and the dread of it. What else had they been born for? It was their chance. With a gay heart they gave their greatest gift, and with a smile to think that after all they had anything to give which was of value. One by one Death challenged them. One by one they smiled in his grim visage, and refused to be dismayed. They had been lost, but they had found the path that led them home; and when at last they laid their lives at the feet of the Good Shepherd, what could they do but smile?" [1]

"Then said I unto the angel, What young man is it that crowneth them and giveth them palms into their hands? So he answered and said unto me, It is the Son of God."

There is no greater impoverishment in our

[1] *A Student in Arms*, by Donald Hankey.

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hymn-book than the loss of the word "young' as Watts wrote it:

"When I survey the wondrous Cross
Where the young Prince of Glory died."

And He Who died at thirty-three, after three years of ministry which set the world eternally aflame, most truly walked with these and welcomed them. Never rest content with reading what Dean Colet would have called the "blotterature" of the war period. We who knew these men know also that that blotterature is not true; and least of all was it true of our friends who lived for the most part in a far higher innocence and honesty than the present world which has profited by their actions and ceased to lament their loss. There was a Christ in Flanders; not some strange White Comrade emerging now and then to some unusual act of isolated protection, but veritably and indeed taken and received by the faithful. There were saints in the household of Cæsar who learnt from Christ to love their own, and loved them to the end.

There, in the dark of a dug-out, the fine old colonel admits that he never goes to sleep until he has said his evening hymn.

There, crouched in the shell-hole, one man pulls out the Gospels and reads silently, until the others tell him to read aloud.

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There, in the outer darkness, struggling back from the Menin Road, is a stretcher-bearer alone with a badly wounded man. A gas-cloud overwhelms them, and the wounded man has lost his gas-mask. Yet in the morning light a mask is found upon his face, with the stretcher-bearer stifling beside him.

There in a sunken cellar, or there in a crazy garret, the Upper Room renews its grace with a new meaning; for now it is the ever-living Lord who feeds them, and the disciples who have come to find strength to die.

Thus was His Covenant renewed. But they have their covenant also with you all.

"Do not deceive yourselves," they would say; "do not imagine that an age of supreme sacrifice can well be followed by an age of supreme self-indulgence. Our day is at its close, but realize from this moment onwards that, whatever else is left undone, our work must be accomplished by you, or fall and fail for ever. Your age, which has entered into an inheritance which we purchased, will not lack its sufficiency of ambitious and successful men. Let some of you be ambitious and successful in a deeper direction. Be ambitious to undergird this stricken ship of England. Be ambitious to serve the cause of Christ with every silent power within you. Be ambitious to devote your lives to the spreading of a new spirit between man and man; to give one child a chance, which

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but for your thought of us, it would not have; to turn one dark to light; to win one new disciple to our Captain's cause. These are the things we ask of you, as you look back and see once more from the hills, where you now stand in the morning light, our bones in the valley behind you."

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ENGLAND

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ENGLAND

I USED to push round on a bicycle quite a lot, the three chief points of my circuit being London, Oxford, Beaulieu. On a far-off summer evening of those all too-tranquil days —now infinitely remote—I left Oxford for the last time as an undergraduate, on an old push-bicycle. Final schools were just over. When they had begun I was in the Acland Nursing Home with a high temperature, and went down for the first few days in a triumphal hansom cab, which trickled aspirin tablets all down "the High." Now the last day of schools was over; and I, no longer feverish, but weak with aspirin, decided over a late and lonely tea in the Union garden that I would ride all night—a habit with me then.

I rode through the summer evening as far as Basingstoke; the lights of the town were below me at 11 P.M. A summer thunderstorm now broke; and I, devoid of shelter, caught what I could. The deluge put out my lamp, always a pious flame and eager to expire, so that I had no course but to walk into Basingstoke, where innumerable hostelries were disposing somewhat abruptly of their patrons.

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The dew of heaven brought hunger on me; and I found a fruit shop, which I entered in the hope that other things might be obtainable. I bought a pound of strawberries to encourage conversation, and was then invited into the inner room to dry myself and rest awhile.

Here in the common living-room a cheerful English family was assembled. I spent the first ten minutes attempting to relate the denizens to one another. The two girls were obviously daughters; the robust middle-aged man their father; the mother, with her sacred hands all scarred and bruised by household tasks, uncomely to the outward eye, but precious to all English life, was she who had served me in the shop. There was, moreover, a young man with a forelock (rare, even then, in rural England). He was apprenticed to the butcher, but lodged here. Another apprentice was from Thorneycroft's works, then in their early days. Beyond all these there was another man, ill-shaved and tired, and hungry. He, also, it appeared, had come in from the shop a few minutes before to shelter from the storm, for these were folk who in their simple way liked to obey Our Lord's command, and had asked him farther in.

On the half-cleared table there was a half-eaten pie, very visibly of rabbit. The cloth had been partly pushed back, and some glasses of

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beer and teacups stood for the delectation of those who had thus dined. The hungry man and myself were bidden to fall to upon the remains of the pie. A daughter went out into the scullery and returned with a knife and fork apiece. Now came my part, the division of the feast. And since the aspirin had left me without appetite, and rabbit pie revolts me, I endeavoured to share the remainder unequally. At this point my *vis-à-vis* laid down his knife and fork and spoke to me savagely: "You take your share," he said; "no nonsense about it." I muttered something about not really wanting it, to which he still more savagely replied: "In the parts where I comes from we like fair do-es." Shamefacedly, and greatly against my will, I reverently obeyed.

Think now on this man. Had I gone to an hotel in Basingstoke I should have missed that immortal sentence: "In the parts where I comes from we like fair do-es." Here was a waif and stray, all down-at-heel, and woebegone; a tramp, nothing more nor less; a suspect, with every man's hand against him only too readily. But within him still resided those elemental English Christian virtues, a quiet sustaining tradition of fairness above all. The parts he came from had failed to find him work, had sent him forth to wander, would receive him back unwillingly; yet he bore no grudge against them, but quoted them with

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pride to a stranger, denying his own hungry stomach.

By and by we retired to rest. A cupboard door was opened, and a flight of stairs disclosed. Up these we went with a propriety not always seen in English country houses. At the top were two doors; one room belonged to the family, the other held the butcher's apprentice, Thorneycroft's man, the tramp and myself. There was bedding and to spare; the one great inconvenience was that we could not all agree to have the window open—though I won in the end. Two of us then said our prayers, the other two looking on with dumb and half-regretful eyes, not knowing how to do it. As a result we talked religion for an hour, until the butcher fell on sleep and snored like all the seven Ephesians rolled together. Soon I alone was left awake, and crept to my emblem of victory, the window, craning my head out to breathe that lovely English air which is nowhere else in the wide world; and the stars gazed primly down upon the lovely landscape, all the more lovely for the little blot of Basingstoke.

It was then that I learned what I have never since forgotten: that if you want to understand the denominational imbroglio, you need only look up at the stars, all held at their respective posts by laws of attraction and repulsion, each beckoning to its neighbour

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"Come hither," each resisting an invitation which would seem to spell extinction of identity. All shining with the same mysterious light, the source itself unseen, yet hardly to be denied by normal consciousness.

The butcher had been a Methodist, and Thorneycroft's man had leanings to the Salvation Army; my friend of the pie was Church of England, and I—what was I then? . . .

I had paid my reckoning with great difficulty before we retired—it was no less than ninepence—and I had warned my host that I should be early astir. At four o'clock the morning was too lovely to resist. When you are staying in this kind of house the rule is (or used to be) that all visitors leave their boots downstairs. My shoes, therefore, and the bag of strawberries and a bicycle pump which declined to reside between its clips, were all in the room below; and down the creaking stairs I went, to find the cupboard door closed. I groped for this and took the final plunge too loudly. A dog I had not saluted overnight was sleeping dimly before the fire. He roused himself. I spoke to him. Merciful heaven, I had forgotten his name! Under such circumstances a dog must be addressed by his name, or he will take offence. It was evident that this dog was beginning slowly to dislike me. I picked up my shoes, one acting as a rocket apparatus towards my bicycle

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pump. The clatter awakened him further: he began to move in my direction. My bicycle was in the yard—it was plainly time to be going. I turned in that half light to find the door, and found only that the door of the staircase had opened against it and jammed it in a manner past analysis. The dog was moving fast by now, to hesitate meant hospital. I tugged at the yard door which yielded nobly, then grated on a chain. There was no time to shut the door and loose the chain. I tugged still harder and the unexpected happened—the chain (as with St Peter) fell straightway to the ground. I fancy the explanation of the miracle was that the screw which held the chain in place upon the inner lintel was puttied in, but I did not wait to make inquiries. As I stepped outside the dog jumped at the closed door: across twenty years of peace and war I can remember the way that door slammed to behind me.

I stood stockinged and safe in the wet straw of the outer yard. Everything was gloriously wet, my bicycle was glistening with moisture. But the lovely light of an English summer day was beckoning me homeward. I slipped on my shoes and began to pedal.

High above Basingstoke, on the Winchester road, I found myself more weary than I knew. I dismounted, threw my bicycle into a hedge, took off my shoes and stockings and went for a walk across the Downs. I came back glowing,

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and pursued my way until on that remote, lone and unfrequented road (as then it was), some ten miles on, I found my soul fainting within me. I halted opposite a most sequestered little gate. There was, it seemed, no other house in all the world than that to which this led. I flung it open boldly and walked up the little garden path. The door of the cottage to my surprise stood open, for I had seen no human being yet, and it was barely five o'clock. Still more to my amazement a human being spoke to me, and spoke to me in French. A trim and busy housewife then revealed herself, and, seeing my sad plight, invited me in, thinking no harm on such a perfect morning. The cottage room was filled with singing birds in cages—not only near the window, but on the walls as well. It appeared that she had met her English husband when he had come as a bird-fancier to buy little green canaries in some district in Provence. Her family was in the business too; and these many cages were the English stock-in-trade. I sat there wondering whether I waked or slept, until her quite inimitable coffee brought conviction to my mind and energy once more to my legs.

Having paid for my coffee, I proceeded on my way. It was a Sunday morning—pray forgive me—and as I passed through Winchester a few (very few, alas!) were wending their way to worship at the early Communion.

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When I reached Southampton it was after nine, and a little eating-shop gave me a poor man's portion.

I take the tale no further; but, as I value my soul, these things are faithfully remembered and recorded, as if on oath. Make what you will of them and the moral stands firm, that behind the outward English landscape is more than motorists see.

England, in truth, is now so old that every rood of her soil is impregnated with the dust of her dead, every pasturage is a parchment of an obliterated people. Sight is not study here; and men must go dismounted from their hurrying dispositions, who would watch the Twilight linger and the seneschal of wisdom stir and wake.

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